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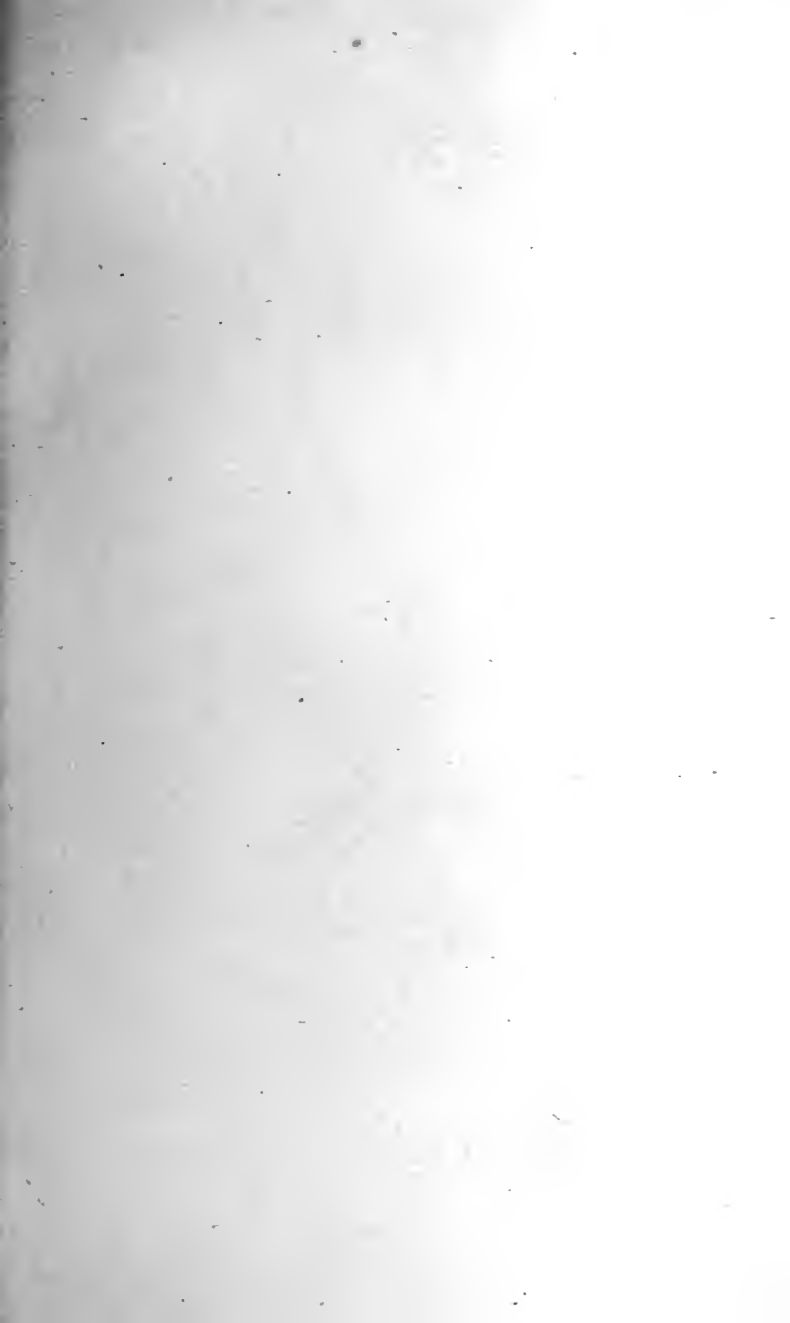
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ANTON RUBINSTEIN









FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY MEDALLION OF RUBINSTEIN.

1839—1889.

# ANTON RUBINSTEIN

## A Biographical Sketch

BY

ALEXANDER M'ARTHUR

“τῶν πόνων πωλοῦσιν ἡμῖν πάντα τὰγάθ' οἱ θεοί.”

EDINBURGH

ADAM AND CHARLES BLACK

1889

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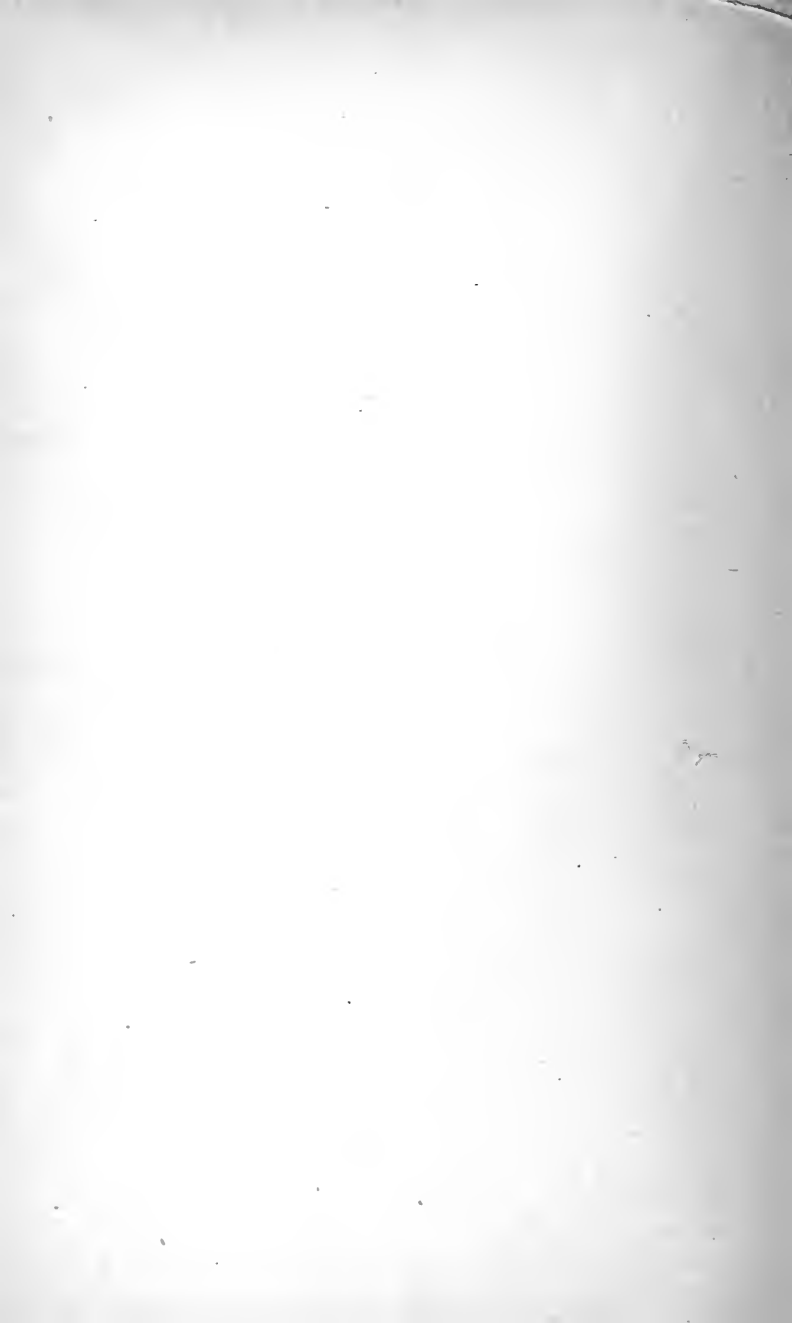
THE AUTHOR



## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

IN presenting this sketch to the public the author does not suggest that it is either complete or comprehensive. He offers it merely as a series of facts in the life of Anton Rubinstein, collected in St. Petersburg from intimate friends of the great composer-pianist, from Russian journals, books, and papers, and from such information as came to light during various conversations held with himself.

ST. PETERSBURG, *December* 1889.





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## CHAPTER I

### BIRTH AND DÉBUT AS PIANIST

IN Russia the year 1829 was an ominous one for the Jews; clouds blacker and greater than ever were darkening their horizon, and all manner of plans were being laid and put in operation against their interests and even their existence.

Under Peter the Great they had been persecuted unmercifully, but even under him they were more humanely treated than by his successors; and as civilisation advanced in Russia, so advanced their miseries and hardships side by side.

In 1810 the Jews were prohibited from holding any position in the State, from living in or travelling to any town as they wished—a law in full force to this day,—from buying land, from educating their children, and, except by

the payment of enormous fines, most of the avenues of commerce were shut to them.

They were then as now the legal prey of every dishonest member of the State; they had no rights, no redress, and no justice dealt them, and in all the ways an autocratic government leaves open they were plundered and oppressed systematically.

Such was the heritage Anton Rubinstein was born to on the 28th (16th o.s.) of November 1829, in the village of Wechwotinez, near Jassy, in Moldavia.

Till the coming of Nicholas, however, the Jews had managed to exist; they had their own peculiar customs, language, dress, and worship allowed them, and although trampled on and hunted down all over Russia, they still contrived there to increase—even thrive—defying all persecution.

It seemed as if nothing could exterminate them—as Nicholas wished, for he detested the whole race. That emperor, however, was not a man to be bearded in his own den, and the consequence was the great ukase against the Jews which worked such a difference in the future of one who was afterwards to be one of the greatest

of them, one of the brightest stars in Russia's art world, and one of the staunchest of her patriots, her philanthropists, and her national benefactors.

At the time of the ukase the family of Rubinstein consisted of sixty people, at their head being the grandfather of the pianist-composer, a man of no ordinary character, Roman Rubinstein.

"Ah, it is our wealth they want now," he said as he read the ukase; then, after long consideration, he gathered all his family about him at Berditscheff, in the government of Kiev, near the town of that name, and commanded them to be baptized, for, as he said sarcastically, "better undergo the ordeal of holy water and chrism and become Christians—if holy water and chrism would make them Christians—than lose their wealth."

Anton Rubinstein was then a year old, and no one dreamt of his being a musician. His father, Gregor Rubinstein, a Polish Jew, was not musical, neither was his grandfather the sturdy Roman Rubinstein; and, with the exception of his mother, Clara Levenston, a German Jewess, who was an excellent pianoforte-player, not one member of the family, so far as Anton Rubinstein himself can learn, was musical.

Four years after the wholesale baptism of the Rubinstein family at Berditscheff, Gregor, the father of Anton Rubinstein, removed to Moscow, where, thanks to his baptism and the wealth saved to his father through it, Gregor Rubinstein became owner and manager of a pencil manufactory there.

His eldest son Anton was then five years old, a bright little fellow with tangled curls falling about his shoulders and over into his serious eyes, who sang to himself all day long, and when his mother went to the piano to play she noticed how the little fellow stood by her side listening attentively. At length, one day, when she found him trying to play on a violin-like instrument he had constructed for himself of wood and elastic, she decided that her son must be musical and commenced to give him lessons.

His progress was astonishingly rapid—nothing obstructed it, and he learned with a facility that at length drove his mother, after a year and a half of her own teaching, to place him under the guidance of the first pianoforte teacher in Moscow—Professor Villoing.

A year and a half passed by, and half Moscow was then beginning to talk of the wonder-

ful talents and playing of the little Rubinstein ; and at length, in the summer of 1839, some enterprising philanthropists came to Gregor Rubinstein and begged him to allow his son to play in public for the benefit of a charity.

At first Gregor Rubinstein refused ; the *wunderkind* craze had not yet reached Moscow, and it was the fashion in Jewish families, or in families of Jewish descent, to repress little people rather than to notice them ; and although Anton Rubinstein's parents quite understood their son's talent, they feared the effect of public praise and the possible harm to his character through it, and they had then no intention of his becoming a professional musician ; after earnest solicitation, however, the philanthropists managed to get the parents' permission, and Anton Rubinstein's début took place on the 23d of July 1839 in Petrovsky Park, at Moscow, before a wildly enthusiastic audience.

On this occasion Rubinstein played the *Allegro* from the Hummel Concerto with orchestra, Thalberg's *Andante*, and four small pieces of Liszt, Field, and Henselt ; and a local paper of the time, the Moscow *Galatea*, speaks of the performance as follows under the head-

ing, "Début of the child of nine years," "The artist Anton Rubinstein."

"Loud applause followed, and universal wonder was felt by his audience during the interval between each piece, which the young Rubinstein really played with astonishing art; one half of the wonder being caused by the ease with which the child-artist overcame all difficulties, the little fingers travelling over the pianoforte keys with the greatest velocity, bringing forth a beautiful clear tone, and at all times the necessary force; but the most wonderful thing of all was that the child-artist fully entered into the composer's idea and understood his aim.

"He certainly has the soul of an artist and the feeling for the beautiful, and there lies with him so much musical talent, that in time, after the complete perfecting and development of it, the young artist will undoubtedly be able to procure himself an honourable place in the ranks of European celebrities."

. . . . .

This latter prophecy has been fulfilled to the letter, and the Moscow audience who so wildly paid their homage to the little artist, who was expressly placed on a table by the director Bas-



chiloff in order that he might be seen, was but the first of thousands of audiences that have been moved to ecstasy and wonder by Anton Rubinstein's genius.

This concert and its success decided the child's career, and from that he settled down to his musical studies with Villoing, in preparation for a musical tour which took place two years later.

This residence of Rubinstein in Moscow has not been without its influence on the formation of his tastes and ideas, notably his patriotism, and his belief in the musical future of Russia—a belief, by the way, shared by Liszt.

Moscow is still the *Russian* capital of Russia and its true representative city. Here it is that one sees what Russian life really is, and it is here that one finds all those peculiar national customs, modes of thought, and originalities of which there are no traces or signs in European St. Petersburg.

Moscow is a city without an equal in Europe for beauty and strangeness, and from the heights of the Kremlin one looks down on a view that is fairy-like. Hundreds of golden domes belonging to its churches glitter in the sunlight, the façades of the houses are yellow, white, and

rose colour, their roofs red, green, and blue, and altogether make up one superb piece of colour that needs to be seen to be comprehended.

In springtime, when the lilac and lime and laburnum-trees are blossoming in all the gardens, when the surrounding hills are covered with verdure, and the Moskwa winds like a silver thread by the gardens and houses of the city, then Moscow is a dream-city.

Here the people are Russian, untouched by western civilisation ; and that jealousy and self-sufficiency of and for themselves which characterises the innate nature of the true Russian seems here, under the shadow of the Kremlin and amidst all the hundreds of beautiful churches, to flourish and grow apace.

Rubinstein caught this infection as a child, and amidst all the varied and strange experiences of his maturer years never lost it.

In Moscow, Rubinstein was a child living and thinking as other children under his parents' immediate guardianship with his two sisters and two brothers till his twelfth year, when life—and that hardest of all lives, the artist one—commenced for him in all earnestness with his first concert tour.

## CHAPTER II

### FIRST CONCERT TOUR

BORN when the nineteenth century was still young, Rubinstein witnessed its most brilliant period during his youth and early manhood, especially the epoch of which we now write.

The intellectual world of Europe was entering a new phase and a golden one; dazzling lights were on all sides, Heine and De Musset were young eager enthusiasts, George Sand was developing her startling theories. Liszt, with his reckless daring, either by the shores of Como, amongst the orange groves and myrtle thickets, or in the brilliance of Parisian *salons* surrounded by the Aspasia's and Axiotheas of the age, was living after the fashion of those unrestrained pleasure-seekers one reads of in the pages of Boccaccio's *Decamerone*; and gentle refined Chopin, in the midst of his beautiful country-

women, was teaching, all through the medium of his Pleyel pianoforte, that a deeper depth existed in love, in art, in poetry than the world had understood before.

It was an age of brilliance, of dazzling romanticism, of great deeds, and of greater vitality. Inspired by the pages of Goethe, a new generation of Teutonic youth was working wonders, and the *salons* of Paris were crowded with a host of young enthusiasts who had amongst them all that genius, talent, art, youth, and hope had to give.

In German lecture-halls and public life, in the privacy of home life and editorial sanctums, there was a great change, a stirring-up of all the elements of vitality and enthusiasm.

Mendelssohn was writing composition after composition, each more fresh and lovely than the other, and amidst the delightful circle at Leipziger Strasse, No. 3, was creating that pure taste for art which bears its influence to our own time.

Weber had finished his work, and in *Frei-schütz* and *Oberon* had taught the world through music the meaning of the new romanticism that was transforming all.

Schumann was engaged at his desk, eagerly

and enthusiastically working in the pages of his *Musik Zeitung* to educate the taste of his countrymen to broader and truer views in art, denouncing the false and artificial, helping the younger generation to the understanding of great ideals, and encouraging all to persevere in search of the truth, found only with the noble, the great, and the pure in Art, whilst in his compositions he was giving to posterity a treasure inexhaustible.

Beethoven and Schubert were sleeping at Wahrung under the shadow of the surrounding hills, and the people of Germany were but tentatively beginning to understand and to grapple with the immortal works of the former.

The Swan of Pesaro and his gentle rival Bellini had called into existence a new race of singers : Mario, Grisi, Malibran, Juglini, Pasta, Lablache, all since unmatched as actors, artists, and singers, held the boards.

Ernst had succeeded Paganini ; and Liszt, well likened to a meteor by one of his contemporaries, when not in silken bondage, was periodically flashing his genius from north to south, fascinating all with his wit, his *bonhomie*, his genius, and leaving wonder and regret behind him in all lands.

He was in the very zenith of his fame, the idol of the learned, of society, of the public, a great sun which extinguished all lesser lights; that another such as he would arise was undreamt of, and when a rumour did come from Eastern Russia of a wonderful boy-pianist who held all spell-bound, the rumour was treated with scorn. Nevertheless it was a rumour that proved no impresario's boast, no journalistic fable, when in the season 1841-42 Anton Rubinstein set out on his first *tournée* with his master Villoing.

They came to Paris first, and this was a momentous event in the life of the young artist, for here he met not only the greatest master of the keyboard then living, but also the greatest composer for it, Liszt and Chopin.

The effect of Liszt's playing on Rubinstein was so great that, as he himself tells us, he could only cry as he listened. Liszt attended his concert, and just as in Liszt's own prodigy days he had been embraced by Beethoven, so Liszt embraced Rubinstein, publicly proclaiming him his successor and colleague.

For Chopin, Rubinstein played at the Polish composer's residence, the latter in turn playing to him some of his (Chopin's) own mazurkas.



Antoine Rubinstein  
10 Juillet 1841.





Altogether the visit to Paris was a great event in the life of the young pianist, and it was with reluctance he quitted the scene of so much brilliance for other cities.

In London, for one reason or another, he remained some weeks playing in private before giving his concert; and, strange to say, the young artist received little notice from the press during his first visit—a fact which may be accounted for, perhaps, by the circumstance that Mendelssohn was also there at the same time. Rubinstein heard him play at St. Peter's Church on the organ, Moscheles—who wrote in his diary of the “Russian boy with fingers light as feathers, yet strong as a man's”—on the same day pulling out the stops for the performer.

The *Examiner*, under the heading “A Musical Wonder,” writes as follows:—

“A Russian boy named Antoine Rubinstein, a native of Moldavia, who has not yet completed his twelfth year, is, and has been during the last few weeks, in London, under the care of his teacher M. Villoing, with a view to exhibit his extraordinary talents in this metropolis, though we believe that he has not yet performed in public.

“In private parties he has displayed his

powers as a performer on the pianoforte, and excited the astonishment not only of those who are easily and willingly surprised by youthful genius, but of professors who judge of a performance by its own ability. This lad—who is small for his age and very slenderly made, though his head is of large dimensions—executes with his little hands the very same music in which Thalberg excels, and to perform which, it has been jocosely said, this celebrated artist has been furnished with five fingers and two thumbs to each hand, put in motion by steam power. We have heard Rubinstein play some of these pieces, and can answer for the unimpeachable correctness of his performance; and, what is still more remarkable, for the force by which, through some unparalleled gift of nature, he is enabled to exert a degree of muscular strength which his general conformation, and especially that of his arms and hands, would have induced us to suppose he could not possibly possess. To gratify those whose taste leads them to prefer fashionable music, he plays the fantasias of Liszt, Thalberg, Herz, etc.; but when exhibiting before real connoisseurs he chooses for his purpose the elaborate compositions of the old

German school — the learned and difficult fugues of Sebastian Bach and Handel—all which he executes with an ease as well as a precision which very few masters are able to attain ; and, to add to the wonder, he plays everything from memory, this faculty being apparently as fully developed in him as it is now and then, though rarely, in adults who have perfected it by long practice.

“ We recommend this prodigy—for such he is—not only to the amateur of music, but to physiologists or psychologists, who by their inquiries may perhaps enlarge their knowledge of the human mind and throw some light on that obscure but interesting and too often melancholy subject, premature genius, combined as it is in this instance with partial premature strength.”

The writer of the above, Mr. Ayrton, was a sound musician, scholar, and independent critic, as Ella tells us ; and elsewhere in Ayrton's diary he mentions that Rubinstein may be considered a real prodigy.

Withal, however, Rubinstein's success was not so wonderful as might have been expected. London was then wrapped up in its idol Mendelssohn, and, apart from him, one may

presume, had little time for "musical wonders"; but at the same time Rubinstein had immense success in drawing-rooms, notably in that of Mr. Alsager, a great patron of the fine arts and one of the proprietors of the *Times*.

Rubinstein and his master then continued their tour, which included Norway and Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Austria, and France, in all places meeting with success more or less enthusiastic; Schumann in his *Musik Zeitung* writing of "*Oudine*, a Study for Pianoforte, Op. 1, by Ant. Rubinstein, the talented boy who has already acquired a high reputation as a pianoforte-player."

At the time of his tour Rubinstein was twelve years of age, not in his twelfth year, as is sometimes erroneously stated.

All music dictionaries and biographical notices give Rubinstein's birth erroneously, and this is more or less the fault of the master himself, who for years past has been keeping his birthdays on the 30th (18th) of November instead of on the 28th (16th), as the register in the village of Wechwotinez has it, and giving invariably, till some few months ago, when he himself first discovered his error,

the year 1830 instead of the year 1829 as that of his birth.

Another mistake made in all dictionaries is that of calling him Anton Gregor Rubinstein, instead of simply Anton Rubinstein. This arises from the Russian custom of giving the children the name of their fathers—in this fashion Anton Gregoriewitch, which means nothing more than that Anton is the son of Gregor, even when Rubinstein signs himself A. G. Rubinstein.

## CHAPTER III

### LIFE IN BERLIN—SETTLEMENT IN RUSSIA

IN 1843 Madame Rubinstein, full of energy, and convinced not only of the talents of her eldest son but also of those of her second son Nicolai, who by the way was an artist marred by the overshadowing greatness of his brother, set out with both children to Berlin to consult Meyerbeer on the course she should take in their education. Meyerbeer gave the best advice he or any one else could give, and acting on it Madame Rubinstein remained in Berlin, where the two marvellous boys became the pupils of the learned contrapuntist Professor Dehn.

With Dehn they made rapid progress, Nicolai especially, when news reached Madame Rubinstein in 1846 of the illness of her husband; and taking her son Nicolai she

travelled with all possible speed to Moscow, only to find her husband dead.

A new era began from this in the life of Anton, for when his father's estate came to be finally arranged it was discovered that little had been left for the family, so that Anton, alone in Berlin, suddenly found himself completely thrown on his own resources at sixteen years of age.

He left Berlin for Vienna, and remained there giving lessons till 1847, when he went on a tour in Hungary with the flautist Heindl.

After that matters became worse. He returned to Berlin with high hopes and a vast ambition, only, however, to be stopped at all points by an empty purse. This certainly was another side of the picture for the high-spirited lad who as a juvenile wonder had been petted and made much of in every town in Europe.

At last there came a time when things seemed desperate. Fortune smiled on him less in Berlin than even in Vienna, for the country was passing through the struggles of 1848, during which, in the political excitement of the time, it had no attention to give to art ; and at length he de-

cided on going to Hamburg and taking passage to America to try his fortunes there.

To the ever-to-be-regretted loss of America, however, his friends dissuaded him from this step, although he had reached Hamburg; and, listening to them, he gave up the plan, turned his back on Germany, and in the autumn of 1848 reached St. Petersburg.

At the Russian frontier he met with an accident, enormously exaggerated in various biographical sketches of the great pianist, but still, although not dangerous to himself personally, of a nature that was serious and disagreeable enough to cause the young artist some trouble.

Rubinstein, like most young musicians, was weighted with a formidable trunk full of compositions, and this abnormal trunkful roused the suspicions of the secret police at the frontier, and all was confiscated; not without reason, perhaps, for one of the means the Nihilists had for importing seditious matter into Russia was under cover of music manuscripts.

This latter incident has given rise to numerous thrilling tales. "Rubinstein was thrown into prison." "He remained there some



months.” “He was to be sent off to the mines of Siberia, only that, by some lucky chance, Count Wielhorski, a musical Mæcenas of the time, got to hear of the scrape his young friend was in, in time to secure him from all danger.” These and such like are the tales related; but the actual facts are that the MSS. were confiscated, and kept in durance vile for a considerable length of time, Rubinstein carelessly forgetting to inquire after them or for them, till one day at the music shop of Bernard, in St. Petersburg, some one asked him what were the MSS. of his that had been advertised in the *Police Gazette* for sale? they having been regularly advertised by the police in order that they might be claimed by their owner.

Rubinstein then suddenly remembered his early works, and hurried off to the police office, but he was too late, for all had been sold to various greengrocers and butter merchants, and of course were never heard of more.

Rubinstein arrived in St. Petersburg, as one might say, with the cholera, which was just then, in the autumn and winter of 1848, rife in Russia, and daily increasing. Rubinstein fortunately escaped, for on the 21st of November he

assisted at the concert of the renowned Vieuxtemps, which took place in the hall of the Peter and Paul's school, the two artists playing a sonata of Bach for violin and piano.

There is extant a rather amusing record of this by a critic named Damcke, who has a good hit at both artists, and that too not without justice.

Damcke was a sturdy critic, a little fond of seeing his own mighty sayings, but withal a valuable man in St. Petersburg at the time, and one who did good service in the way of forming and raising the public taste.

On this occasion Rubinstein and Vieuxtemps were down on the programme to play a sonata of Bach for piano and violin; but knowing perhaps the taste of the public, and wishing to please it, they played, instead of one entire sonata, the most taking movement of the E major sonata and the fugue from the A major sonata; and against this piecemeal affair the critic with vehement zeal sternly protests.

On the 19th December of the same year Rubinstein gave his first musical matinée in St. Petersburg since his prodigy days, in the Salle de Passage Newsky, with the assistance

of Schubert the violoncellist, and Madame Konning, a renowned singer from Holland.

At this matinée Rubinstein played his first concerto, not, however, the splendid E minor concerto now called the first, but an earlier one in F major, never printed, now lost, and forgotten even by Rubinstein himself.

That this concerto deserved a better fate we find by all the critiques written on it, notably that of Damcke, who enthusiastically praises this first concerto of the young composer; and Damcke as a critic was not usually lavish of compliments. The concerto speedily became a favourite, and we find Rubinstein playing it again—"this beautiful concerto," as Damcke calls it in the February of the year 1849. All the Russian papers devote considerable space to a critique on it, one paper strangely enough designating Rubinstein as a foreigner.

On the 9th March Rubinstein played in the concert given by Vieuxtemps, and on the 1st May we find him one of the four players on the platform sitting down to play the *Contrast* of Moscheles,—Levi, Damcke (the critic), and Frackmann being the other players.

The concert season closing in May, Rubinstein in July went to Moscow, and thence to Nijni-Novgorod and other provincial towns, to give concerts, and met with great success.

During the years 1848, 1849, and 1850 the cholera was raging in St. Petersburg, but in spite of the ominous list of deaths regularly given in the daily bulletins, the Petersburgers, on the principle of "let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die," acted as if there was nothing to fear, and operas, concerts, masqued balls, and all kinds of amusements, were in full swing.

Henselt was then in all the glory of his career, idolised and made much of by his charming aristocratic bevy of pupils. Vieuxtemps, the prince of violinists, as the papers designate him, was a resident also each season, and the Italian Opera was in all its perfection.

In 1850 Mario, Grisi, Tamberlick, and Tamburini were singing, and all that feverish delight—now inexplicable—born of the Italian Opera of the time, was in the air. Even Rubinstein himself wept with the best over the melting strains of Mario's and Grisi's voices,

as he acknowledges now, although he looks back on it all in bewilderment.

He had then written his first opera, *Dimitry Donskoi*, and at a great concert for the poor we find the overture performed in this year.

But what a musical feast was that at the end of this year on the 17th December, when, at the concert of Madame Saloman, Tamberlick, Tamburini, Vieuxtemps, and Rubinstein all took part in that most magnificent of concert-halls, the Salle de Noblesse!

From this time forward Rubinstein's position was firm in St. Petersburg, and he was recognised on all sides as a young composer-pianist not only of abnormal, but of growing powers. This recognition may be said to have reached its culminating point in 1852, when the critics with one consent seem to put forth their best efforts in trying which of them will write the most enthusiastically of the great artist.

In February of 1852 he gave a concert in the Lichtenthal Salle, and his friend Damcke, in a burst of uncontrolled enthusiasm, designates him as a veritable artist as well by nature as by education.

On this occasion Rubinstein had given his

concert regardless of expense, for the love of art, as Damcke says, and not like others for the love of money. And when accounts came to be settled the young artist, although the house was a full one, had to be contented with the honour. This, however, was enough for him, for he had engaged a first-class orchestra to perform his grand symphony—the second of his composition—and that was all he wanted.

In fact, Rubinstein's star was steadily rising to its meridian. He had that great capacity for taking pains which Goethe praises, and his time night and morning was devoted unceasingly to his art. We hear less, however, of his pianism than of his works, perhaps because Rubinstein himself, whether as player or conductor, supported them; and Rubinstein's own genial nature is needed for his compositions, and is the soul of them, although few understand this.

This year too, 1852, his first opera, *Dimitry Donskoi*, was performed for the first time, and with great success, at the Grand Theatre; and it is to this opera that Rubinstein owes one of the warmest friendships in his life, that of one of

the most learned and remarkable women of her time, the Grand Duchess Hélène.

It is characteristic of her intelligence that she should at once have divined the true gold, the coming greatness of his genius ; and in the summer of 1852 we find Rubinstein domiciled at her palace in Kamenoi Ostrow, or Kamenoi Island as it reads in English.

How happy the young composer was here one can guess, for the palace of the Grand Duchess was the resort of all that was learned, beautiful, and brilliant in human form in Russia or passing through it—a sort of royal hôtel Rambouillet ; then add to this the beauty of its surroundings, especially in spring and summer.

Those who have not been in Russia can have no idea of the wild, fragrant, witching beauty of the northern summer ; the white poetic nights ; the greenness, the delicacy of bloom and foliage ; and this Kamenoi Island, situated in the Neva, sheltered by other islands as lovely as itself,—this island, with its beautiful pinewoods and groves, the haunt of the nightingale and thrush, its freshness, its quietude, and loveliness,—was then as now a

miniature Arcadia, a fit home for a poet and a dreamer—an artist with the hot blood of youth coursing through his veins, and the longing for the mystic and beautiful in life, unspoiled by time, untouched by reason, along with the hope and belief in the future that made life an ecstasy deep in the recesses of his heart.

Here Rubinstein, at the request of the Grand Duchess, commenced composing his three operas, *Thomas the Fool*, *Vengeance*, and the *Siberian Hunter*, all taken from Russian subjects, for the Grand Duchess was an enthusiastic lover of Russia, a believer in its resources; and under the influences of his royal friend, the hope and belief Moscow had first planted in Rubinstein as a child again sprang up, and stronger than ever.

In 1853 were published the two well-known melodies for pianoforte, one of them, the beautiful melody in F major, being dedicated to H.I.H. the Grand Duchess Hélène; and at a concert the same year given by himself he played the F major trio, the A minor sonata for piano and violin, and also that gem amongst all his works, the well-known sonata for piano and violoncello in F major that has been



played and listened to with delight wherever chamber music is known or cultivated.

There is little reason to doubt that this sonata owes at least some of its beauty to the inspiration Rubinstein found in the brilliant circle of learned men and beautiful women he associated with at Kamanoi Ostrow at the palace of the Grand Duchess, and as well in the beautiful surroundings of the palace.

In the spring of 1853 we find he has altered for the better his beautiful F major concerto, in the andante; but, as usual, it is Rubinstein the composer who overshadows Rubinstein the pianist.

This same year Balfe was in St. Petersburg, creating great excitement with his works.

During the spring, *Thomas the Fool*, *Vengeance*, and the *Siberian Hunter* were finished, the first of these being performed with great success at the theatre, since burnt, and upon the site of the present Marie Theatre.

The remaining operas were never performed, the manuscripts being burnt at the theatre, but the *Siberian Hunter* still exists in MS. at Peterhof, in Rubinstein's own musical library.

This year, always indefatigable, Rubinstein

was preparing himself for his great concert tour, when he was to return to the scenes of his childish triumphs, and show to the world at large what Anton Rubinstein, the child prodigy, had become.

If those who invariably croak over prodigies would only remember this, what a world of words they might wisely save themselves, for just as all remember the prodigies who have not turned out geniuses, so all seem to forget Tasso reciting and composing verses at seven years old; Blaise Pascal at the age of six discovering unaided the thirty-second proposition of Euclid; Mozart at the same age writing a pianoforte concerto; and every musician of note, almost without exception, a prodigy, whether as executant or composer, in most cases both, as Beethoven, Bach, Handel, Chopin, Mendelssohn, and Liszt.

## CHAPTER IV

### GREAT CONCERT TOUR

IN 1854, on the 12th March, Rubinstein gave a concert in St. Petersburg previous to making his second European tour (the first having been made in his twelfth year), and at this concert the F major symphony was performed as well as the concerto in G major, No. 3.

He had then reached the summit of all possible ambition as pianist and composer, and all St. Petersburg enthusiastically acknowledged this. He was one of the first artists of the day, if not the first, and one must remember that in those years Liszt was no infrequent visitor in St. Petersburg; besides this, Rubinstein was also spoken of as one of the first of living composers, and so recognised.

Rubinstein started on his tour in high spirits, and everywhere met with enthusiastic success;

in fact, his tour was one triumphal march through Europe: he came only to conquer.

In Rotterdam he and Liszt had a curious experience. Both artists were engaged for the music festival there, and, living together in the one hotel, they were in the habit of driving out together. On one occasion, having some business at one of the shops near the quay, they drove there; but, the business ended, they returned to their carriage, only to find it had gone off and was nowhere to be seen. There was nothing, therefore, to be done except walk home, and this they started to do.

At that time both were young men. Liszt, tall, stately, dandified, although disordered in attire, wearing light kid gloves, and with long golden hair thrown back on his shoulders; Rubinstein, with his lion head and Beethovenish cast of features, was no less striking in appearance. The appearance of both, however, awoke the sense of the strange, and to the vulgar mind, therefore, the ludicrous, in the minds of the fisherwomen—brawny red-armed Amazons—loitering about the quays with their creels of fish, and they gathered in a considerable number about the two artists.

Liszt, aristocratic to his finger tips, was in despair, and as the women, gathering closer about him, observed this they became more and more hilarious and rude, till finally the two unhappy artists had to come to a dead stop, the women forming a ring and dancing around them, plucking them by the sleeves and coat tails and laughing uproariously.

At length matters became insupportable, and Rubinstein, in one of his sudden passions, broke through the ring, Liszt following; and taking to their heels the two artists fled to their hotel, followed by the derisive shouts of their tormentors till they got safely under cover.

On this concert tour Rubinstein did not visit England, because of the Crimean war, then going on, for he was, like all Russians of the day, forbidden England; and the sight of the British fleet anchored in the Baltic, which he had seen through a telescope from Cronstadt, was enough of things English for him that year.

In September he was in Leipzig, where he first met one of his music publishers, Bartholf Senff, and in January of the year 1856 Senff took some of his works.

Shott, however, of Mayence, had already published many other works for him, so that fortune in all senses was smiling on the young composer-pianist.

During the season 1855-56 *Paradise Lost* was given with great success at Weimar, and the same season saw Rubinstein playing in Vienna.

The war being now over, Rubinstein in 1857 came to London to electrify all with his wonderful touch, power, and artistic excellence. He made his début as a fully fledged artist, no longer a child prodigy, at the concerts of John Ella's Musical Union, and that eminent conductor tells us that "never since the last appearance of Mendelssohn, at the Philharmonic Concert, 1847, was so much enthusiasm expressed by a musical audience as at the début of Rubinstein in 1857 at the Musical Union."

At the same time there were certain critics in London who wrote in disparagement; but all their zeal was but spilt ink, for nothing could efface his splendid genius; and the mediocre talent they were farming, the cause of their onslaught on Rubinstein as well as Liszt also,

quietly but surely got sent to the level it merited, and taken down from the height it assumed.

During his stay in London an amusing incident occurred with Rubinstein at Court. His friend the Grand Duchess Hélène had given him a letter of introduction to Prince Albert, and this on coming to England Rubinstein forwarded through the Russian embassy. A short time after he received a note from Colonel Phipps appointing a day when Prince Albert was to receive him, and when the day arrived the colonel came to Rubinstein's hotel to fetch him.

On arrival at the palace Rubinstein was desired to wait by a certain door, and on a given signal to enter. This was simple enough, and at the signal Rubinstein entered and found to his astonishment the entire royal family—cousins, aunts, and uncles—wearing full decorations and orders, standing in a semicircle to receive him.

What did it mean?

Rubinstein advanced and bowed. The Queen, Prince Albert, and entire family acknowledged this by another bow; then came a dead

silence, Rubinstein staring at the circle, not having the faintest idea what further move he was expected to make—the royal family, stiff and silent, staring back at him.

It was a nightmare and a disagreeable one for Rubinstein, till, recovering himself sufficiently to look about him, he espied a pianoforte not far off, and going over to it he opened it, and sitting down commenced to play.

Immediately the semicircle broke up; whispers and smiles followed, and at length Prince Albert came up and stood by the composer-pianist whilst he played. Later on Rubinstein learned that his letter having come through the Russian embassy, while several secret diplomatic missions connected with the late war were going on at the same time, he had been mistaken for a secret agent of the Russian court coming to London in the disguise of a musician.

In 1858 Rubinstein came again to London, the success and enthusiasm being greater than ever; and on this occasion he played at one of Dr. Wylde's concerts Beethoven's G major concerto.

Before either of these London visits, at the



age of twenty-eight, Rubinstein had finished four symphonies—of these two are lost—four piano concertos—one of which is also lost—four operas, *Paradise Lost*, string pieces, and a host of other pieces, all between the years 1848 and 1857, amounting to more than fifty works—no small number when one recollects that from 1854 onwards he was engaged in tour after tour all over Europe, seldom staying more than a week in any one place.

After 1858 he wrote *Die Kinder der Haide*, which was given under the composer's direction 21st February 1861 in Vienna, and with the most complete success. We may well say he had no longer any fault to find with fortune, for it would have been hard to recognise in Anton Rubinstein, the great pianist-composer—the successor of Beethoven, as the Viennese critics enthusiastically proclaimed him—the youth who fourteen years before had given lessons in Vienna, and left it unknown and unrecognised to seek his fortune elsewhere.

## CHAPTER V

### FOUNDING OF THE ST. PETERSBURG CONSERVATORY

IN 1862 the St. Petersburg Conservatory, Rubinstein's work and idea, was founded; and were it for nothing but this, the great pianist-composer must have earned the heartfelt gratitude of Russia and Russian musicians in doing for his native land what Mendelssohn had done for Germany in Leipzig—an invaluable service to posterity.

In 1861 musical taste in Russia was at a stand-still; the court and aristocracy were patronising Italian Opera, already in its decline—the miserable decline of hackneyed melodies, maudlin sentiment, and worn-out voices. Henselt, like a miniature Chopin, was busying himself only with the aristocratic amateurs, many of them the fairest flowers of St. Peters-

burg *salons*; and altogether the future was not promising, the middle classes being without guide or opportunity. There was no conservatory in all Russia, and the few musical schools were ill managed and inadequate, and the Russians, just like the English people of the same time, were entirely dependent for their teaching and their music on foreign artists, having no resources of their own.

Rubinstein had all along seen the necessity for a conservatory and studied the chances of its success, and on his consulting the Grand Duchess Hélène and the Count Wielhorski, as well as some other friends, they entered willingly and enthusiastically into his scheme; and finally, when all preliminary business had been safely arranged and a grant from the Government obtained, Rubinstein succeeded in founding, on the school of the Russian Musical Society, the present St. Petersburg Conservatory, now second to none in Europe, thanks to the never-ending care and concern of the great pianist. He needs no other monument to his philanthropy and patriotism: he can have no greater.

In founding the Conservatory, Rubinstein took the directorship, gave large sums for its

maintenance, remained in St. Petersburg giving lessons to the pupils who had flocked from all parts of Russia,—and this too when he was making fortunes by his yearly concert tours,—and in short spared himself no amount of worry, toil, and trouble to produce the result Russia and Russian students are benefiting by to-day.

During this directorship, and presumably because of it, Rubinstein was unable to be at Dresden in the season of 1863 to witness the first representation of his *Feramors*, the libretto taken from Moore's *Lalla Rookh*, which had a magnificent reception. But although the great pianist-composer missed some of the splendours and triumphs offered his genius through his praiseworthy self-sacrifice for the Conservatory, he found some of the more ordinary joys of man ; for, no longer the rolling-stone he was from 1854 to 1861, when he went from town to town in triumph, shutting himself all alone in Swiss chalets or in German watering-places,—where, although a bachelor, he invariably took an entire house for himself, to save himself from the gaze of the crowd “and the pianoforte-playing of English ladies,” as he

says,—he settled down quietly in St. Petersburg, giving concerts and conducting them, looking after the Conservatory, going very much into society, and finally, like so many ordinary individuals, falling in love and getting married to a Russian lady, Mlle. Vera Tschekouanoff.

His marriage took place on the 12th July 1865 amidst great rejoicing, and in the same year he began another great concert tour, being at Leipzig in September; Madame Rubinstein of course accompanying him.

In 1867 we find him playing his fourth concerto in D minor, Op. 70, at Dresden.

The same year he was at Paris during the Exhibition, and greatly astonished a pretty Japanese there by singing after her one of her own songs.

In 1867 he gave up the direction of the Conservatory, having left all in order, and again commenced his concert tours, one following the other in rapid succession. In 1870 the *Tower of Babel*, composed during the two preceding years, was given at Königsberg; and during the years immediately preceding his great concert tour in America he wrote that most charming of overtures *Don Quixote*, many

string quartettes, songs, the fantasia in C sharp for piano and orchestra, and his splendid *Leonore* ballad for piano, one of the most superb pieces in piano literature.

This year Rubinstein was in Germany giving concerts, and in 1871 in Austria for the same purpose, being in Ischl on the 12th July, when the sixth anniversary of his marriage-day was kept by all his assembled friends with due rejoicing, and during this summer and the following he was writing his opera *Demon*, founded on Lermontoff's beautiful poetry.

In 1872, during the early weeks of September, he started for America, where he appeared in 215 concerts, and composed variations to the tune of *Yankee Doodle*.

Besides this he conducted many of his symphonies, playing all his own concertos for pianoforte.

Rubinstein saw all the sights and enjoyed America immensely, taking exception, however, to the taste of the people in calling his concerts "shows." This he could not get used to: "as if my concerts were menageries!" he used to cry indignantly when some one inquired after the "show."

In America Rubinstein had many strange experiences. Amongst others, after one of his concerts, when he had been playing various selections from Chopin and Schumann, an American, looking, as Rubinstein describes, "as if all America was in him," came up to the great pianist, and, patting him condescendingly on the shoulder, said patronisingly: "Waal, you hev played well, Mr. Rubinstein, but why don't you play something for the soul?"

"For the soul?" said Rubinstein naïvely; "well, I have played for the soul, for *my* soul, not for yours."

On another occasion, Rubinstein was giving a concert in New Orleans at the theatre there, when the audience narrowly escaped a calamity, for there happened to be a window covered with a copper curtain, and from an opposite window the sun shining on this curtain created the appearance of flames. Of course some one chanced to see this and raised an alarm of fire, creating an instant panic, which Rubinstein with great good sense managed to allay by simply sitting quietly before the pianoforte and waiting till the real cause of the panic was discovered.

Rubinstein's success in America was a wildly

enthusiastic one, and since this, his first and only visit, the great pianist has been invited over yearly by various impresarios. These invitations Rubinstein would have long since accepted, for his remembrances of America are some of the pleasantest of his life—"a charming people, highly artistic, and full of energy" is his description of those he met there—but for the sea voyage, which is too much for his nerves. "To look on the sea, that is delightful; but to be on it," he says sometimes, with his expressive gestures, "horrible."

Rubinstein returned in June 1873, after his 215 performances, to Peterhof as fresh and full of energy as if he had been sitting at his ease at home, and at once commenced writing *Maccabäer* and the dramatic symphony No. 4, D minor.

These finished, he started on a tour in Italy in the year 1874, and in 1875 his *Maccabäer* was given in April for the first time in Berlin, and his dramatic symphony and *Demon* for the first time in St. Petersburg,—enough certainly to satisfy the heart of the most ambitious of composers, three great works given for the first time in one year.



In 1876 Rubinstein was again on an extended tour, being in London in May, gathering there fresh and enthusiastically proffered laurels ; and a critic in one of the musical journals writes that he "met with an amount of enthusiasm which must have far exceeded the anticipation of even the most sanguine of his admirers"; adding, "Words fail to convey any just idea of his pianoforte-playing,"—a criticism only those who have heard the great pianist can fully comprehend.

The following year he was writing *Merchant Kalaschnikoff*, the libretto founded on that period in Russian history connected with Ivan the Terrible, who figures in the opera ; and the same year *Maccabäer* was given in St. Petersburg with a success complete and incontestable, the critics praising it unanimously.

The year 1878 saw Rubinstein flitting from town to town. He was in Vienna, in Amsterdam, in Brussels, in Paris, in St. Petersburg, in Königsberg, in Leipzig, Hanover, Berlin, and elsewhere ; and this year *Merchant Kalaschnikoff* was given for the first time in the Marie Theatre at St. Petersburg.

The opera, however, was withdrawn after

the first representation, for on the morning of the day a Nihilist was hanged. And as the Merchant Kalaschnikoff also suffers this fate in the play at the orders of Ivan the Terrible, and the music and whole opera is one splendid and realistic piece of tragedy, the two events coming together created such a painful, even horrible, impression on the public, that the authorities stopped the play at once. - It was most unfortunate that these events should have happened together, for *Kalaschnikoff* as an opera is incomparable, the dramatic fire, the movement, and entire music being superb.

Strange to say, although all the other operas of Rubinstein have been given outside Russia, in Germany, England, Austria, and America, this, one of the best of them, and for foreign lands one of the most interesting, owing to its original Russian colouring, has not yet been given.

## CHAPTER VI

### “NERO”

ON the 1st of November 1879, in Hamburg, Rubinstein witnessed one of the most brilliant of the many great triumphs he has known during his long and fruitful career, in the production of his *Nero* at the Hamburg Opera House.

The performance lasted four hours, a scene of steadily increasing enthusiasm, till at the end the illustrious composer, laying down his baton, turned to bow to a house that had risen *en masse* in a state of the wildest excitement to cheer him and bring him with the singers fourteen times before the curtain, although the hour was past midnight. Hans von Bülow, one of the audience, was among the most enthusiastic ; and, after all was over and the singers absolutely refused to come on again, Rubinstein was escorted to his hotel by his enthusiastic friends,

and the brilliant event ended by an enjoyable supper, where the great composer had to listen to endless speeches as the enthusiasm and champagne flew apace.

Much of the success was due to the fact of Rubinstein's conducting in person, for he possesses in an enormous degree the power of infusing all his own fire and enthusiasm into an orchestra ; in this, indeed, he is unequalled, and for this reason he is one of the most beloved of conductors by his orchestras ; for, as the members say, the pleasure of playing is only realised under his baton.

Strange to say, Rubinstein has never been conductor of the opera in St. Petersburg, a circumstance that is quite inexplicable to a foreigner who visits Russia—Rubinstein, whom German Intendants would give anything to cage for a few months in some German town as opera director ! After *Nero* had been performed, Rubinstein was again on one of his concert tours, writing at Peterhof the following summer, 1880, his fifth symphony in G minor—that known as the Russian symphony.

This symphony was given when still in MS. at St. Petersburg in October of the same year

under Rubinstein's own direction, and had a splendid success. From St. Petersburg he started for Hamburg, where *Demon* was given for the first time in Germany. After this Rubinstein was in Berlin and all over Europe giving concerts, being in Madrid in February 1881 and in London in May, after giving concerts all over Scotland, England, and Ireland with his usual reward of enthusiastic success, some of the scenes at his farewell concerts being beyond description.

This season in London Rubinstein appeared in three capacities—as pianist, composer, and conductor—his *Demon* being given in Covent Garden under his own direction, and afterwards his *Tower of Babel*, Trebelli and Albani singing in *Demon*.

*Demon* is founded on one of Lermontoff's most beautiful poems, but the subject is not suited to an opera, for the story of the devil coming on earth and falling in love with a beautiful woman, however effective as a poem, is impossible to be represented on the stage. It is unreal, and utterly wanting in that sense of actuality without which a dramatic piece is and must always be a failure.

When given at Covent Garden, even with all possible accessories, the opera was not a success. No one could feel interested in the devil, and no one could suppose a devil in love with Tamara, besides which the story and Lermontoff's poem were unknown to the majority. In Russia, where the people are still naïve and superstitious and Lermontoff read, this opera is one of the favourite ones of Rubinstein's, but in matter-of-fact London it fell flat.

This year Rubinstein lost his brother Nicolai, who was then director of the Moscow Conservatory, and one of the most distinguished musicians in Russia,—a pianist who would have become a renowned virtuoso but for the all-absorbing attraction of his more talented brother.

It was a great loss to Rubinstein, the news of which reached him in the beginning of the year amidst all his triumphs at Madrid.

In Paris in the month of June he gave two concerts, after his London engagements were over, and then the great pianist, after a most arduous spring, hurried on to Peterhof to spend his summer in quietness there.

As a rule, this was denied him at Peterhof, for, surrounded by his friends and admirers, he found himself compelled to be lionised; and had it not been for the regular hours he led, composing invariably for a certain number at a time, all work would have been impossible to him; as it is, it is quite impossible to imagine how he could find time even to copy all he has written,—which he invariably does himself—for, except at Peterhof for a few brief weeks in the summer-time, he was constantly flitting from town to town giving concerts or conducting his works.

At this time his family, two sons and an only daughter, were growing up. And strangely, too, none of them musicians, partly Rubinstein's own fault perhaps, for he himself discouraged them purposely.

The elder son, James, was nearly fifteen years old, having seriously commenced his studies; Anna, some years younger, Rubinstein's special favourite, was growing lovelier every day, a perfect picture of delicate beauty; and the younger son, Alexander, was then a little fellow, still a baby.

Amidst all his many labours, the great

pianist had hardly time to be very domestic, but we can well imagine, after all his travels, how delightful it was for him to rest at Peterhof, and how eagerly his wife and children must have been looking forward to the time when the great pianist would be home again.

At Peterhof, Rubinstein kept open house, and on the evenings when he and Davidoff the great violoncellist and Auer the eminent Hungarian violinist made music, large as the villa is, it was always too small to hold the multitudes that sought admission; and out on the lawns that surround it, under the trees, on the steps of the terraces—everywhere—were groups of people listening in dead silence to the sounds that floated out to them from the open windows of the music-saloon.

The winter of 1881 saw Rubinstein again on a concert tour, and in January of 1882 his fifth symphony was given under his own direction at Leipzig with distinguished success.



## CHAPTER VII

### GEISTLICHE OPER

IN the *Signale* of June 1882 Rubinstein's letter on sacred opera was reprinted from a work entitled *Vor den Coulissen*, edited by Joseph Lewinsky.

“Zu öfteren Malen,” he writes, “und von verschiedenen Seiten wurde ich gefragt was ich unter dem Titel ‘Geistliche Oper’ verstände den ich meinen Compositionen *Das Verlorne Paradies* und *Der Turmbau zu Babel* beigelegt habe. Ich habe diese Frage mundlich gar manches Mal beantwortet, wollte mich auch häufig darum ersucht schriftlich über dieselbe äussern—aber ehe ich mir noch klar geworden, in welcher Form ich meine schriftliche Antwort kleiden, ob ich meine Gedanken zu einer Brochüre einem Buch oder einem Zeitungsartikel gehalten solle, wird mir Ihre ehrenvolle Einla-

dung, mich an dem Werke *Vor den Coulissen* durch einen Beitrag zu betheiligen. So ergreife ich denn die gebotene Gelegenheit, die Frage wenn auch nur flüchtig, in einigen Puncten schriftlich zu beantworten. Ist doch der Titel Ihres Buches der Sache, die ich vorzubringen habe, durchaus entsprechend.

“ Das Oratorium ist eine Kunstgattung, die mich seit jeher zum Protest stimmte; die bekanntesten Meisterwerke dieser Gattung haben mich (nicht bei ihrem Studium sondern beim Hören, in den Aufführungen) immer kalt gelassen, ja oft geradezu miszgestimmt. Die Steifheit der Formen, sowohl der musikalischen, wie insbesondere der poetischen, erschienen mir stets in völligem Widerspruch zu der hohen Dramatik der Stoffe. Nun gar die groszartigen Gestalten des alten oder neuen Testaments von Herren in schwarzem Frack, mit weisser Halsbinde, gelben Handschuhen, ein Notenheft vor dem Gesicht oder, von Damen in modernster, oft extravaganter Toilette, singen zu hören und zu sehen, das hat mich immer dermassen gestört, dass ich zu reinem Geniessen niemals gelangen konnte. Unwillkürlich erfasste

mich der Gedanke, fühlte ich, dass alles was ich als Concertatorium erlebt viel grossartiger, packender, richtiger und wahrer auf der Bühne in Costümen und mit Decorationen, mit der vollen Action darzustellen sein müsse. Freilich müssen zu diesem Zwecke die Texte die erzählende Form verlieren und in die dramatische umgearbeitet werden, eine Arbeit die mir als keine schwierige erscheint und den musikalischen Theil in keiner Weise beeinträchtigen würde.

“Dem Einwand, dass biblische Stoffe ihrer Heiligkeit wegen nicht auf die Bühne gehören, kann ich nicht beistimmen. Es würde dem Theater damit ein ‘testimonium paupertatis’ ausgestellt, ihm gegenüber Missachtung ausgesprochen, während es doch gerade den höchsten Culturzwecken dienen und entsprechen soll. In Bildergallerien beispielsweise ist es meines Wissens die Sixtinische Madonna allein, die in einem nur für sie bestimmten Raume ausgestellt ist; die anderen Heiligenbilder der grössten Meister hängen häufig neben Teniersschen Schenkstuben, ohne dass die einen oder anderen an Wirkung einbüßen.

“Dass das Bedürfniss heilige Stoffe auf der

Bühne zu sehen, beim Volke seit jeher ein reges war, beweisen unter Anderen die Mysterienspiele des Mittelalters, der grosse Eindruck, den noch heute ein Jeder von Oberammergau ungeachtet der mehrmals naiven Musik, die zu den Passionsspielen geboten wird, sicher mitnimmt. Wie mächtig musste erst der Eindruck von Bühnen-Aufführungen, Bach'scher, Handel'scher, Mendelssohn'scher und anderer Werke sein. Ich erinnere, um ein wenn auch nur annäherndes Beispiel zu geben, an die schöne feierliche Stimmung in die man bei den Transparentbildern versetzt wird, die zu einer gewissen Zeit des Jahres in der Berliner Akademie der Künste mit Absingung von a Capella Chören des Domchors gestellt werden.

“Da jedoch die Anschauung dass es eine Entweihung dieser Stoffe wäre, wenn sie auf die Bühne gebracht würden, noch eine so allgemeine ist, dass ihr immerhin Rechnung getragen werden muss, so habe ich die Schaffung einer eigenen Kunstgattung in's Auge gefasst, die in einem eigens für diese Gattung zu erbauenden Theater ihre Stätte fände. Diese Kunstgattung wäre im Gegensatz zur weltlichen

die 'Geistliche Oper' zu nennen, das Theater Geistliches Theater in Gegensatz zum weltlichen Theater, mit einem Künstler- und Chorpersonal eigens für die speciellen Zwecke herangebildet, mit besonderen Verhaltungsregeln für das Publicum—es sollte gleichsam eine 'Kirche der Kunst' entstehen.

"Es hiesse diese Idee ganz falsch auffassen, wollte man darin ein meinerseits gewähltes Mittel zur Verbreitung, Vertretung, Förderung kirchlicher Interessen Ziele oder Zwecke ersehen—für mich gilt nur einzig und allein die Kunstfrage, die wir in diesem Falle als eine hohe, schöne und der Bewirklichung würdige erscheint, frei von anderen Interessen und Fragen irgend welcher Art. Wohl habe ich die Schwierigkeiten die ein solches Problem bietet, eingesehn, jedoch als unüberwindlich sind sie mir nie erschienen.

"So 1. Die zu beschaffenden Geldmittel, welche die Sache erfordert sind kaum in Frage zu stellen, da Angesichts der absoluten Neuheit des Unternehmens grosse Einnahmen mit Sicherheit erwartet werden dürfen.

"2. Bietet auch die Künstlerfrage keine bedenklichen Schwierigkeiten. An Solisten die

sich ausschliesslich diesem Genre zuzuwenden hätten, fehlt es nicht ; denn einer grossen Zahl bisheriger Concertsänger und Sängerinnen—es giebt deren viele und viele unbeschäftigte, wenn auch tüchtige—wäre das ‘geistliche’ Theater eine Rettung. Ebenso würden sich nicht wenige speciell zu diesem Genre herانبilden, als ihrer Individualität entsprechend.

“ 3. Scenische Schwierigkeiten kommen bei den Riesenfortschritten, welche Maschinerien und decorative Theile gemacht und täglich machen, kaum mehr in Betracht. Allerdings müssen Architekt, Maschinenmeister und Decorateur das Theater diesem speciellen Genre anpassend einrichten. Wie das zu machen sei, kann ich als Laie hier nicht entwickeln, doch schwebt mir eine wesentliche Aenderung des Theatergebäudes, des Orchester wie des Zuschauerraumes als notwendig vor. Bei der Bühne selbst musste berücksichtigt werden, dass viele Stoffe die Dreitheiligkeit der Scene, Himmel, Hölle und Erde, erfordern.

“ 4. Die Schwierigkeiten für den Chor, polyphone Satze (wie z. B. Fugen) auswendig zu singen, sind an sich nicht gering. Aber der Chor bewältigt heutzutage in unseren modernen

Opern Schwierigkeiten musikalischer Art, die nicht viel weniger bedeutend sind (die Ermöglichung fördern würde auch ein höherer Gagenetat als an den weltlichen Theatern). Auch kann ja bei der heutigen, entschieden zu empfehlenden, Anwendung von Statisten das Agiren der singenden Massen auf ein Minimum reducirt und dadurch eine grosse Schwierigkeit, das Im-Tactesingen während des Agirens, gehoben werden.

“ Mit der Ermöglichung dieser vier Hauptpunkte erscheint mir die Sache selbst technisch lebensfähig. So schwebt mir denn ein Theater vor, in welchem man in chronologischer Ordnung, die prägnantesten Momente der beiden Testamente, allen höchsten Kunstforderungen entsprechend, aufführt. Die Begebenheiten wie die Persönlichkeiten der beiden sind ja von so grossartiger schöner und poetischer Art, dass eine Veranschaulichung derselben durch Darstellung auf der Bühne mit Beihülfe aller Künste nicht ermangeln wird, den Dank des Publicums (Volkes) zu gewinnen, den Skeptiker zu interessiren, ja sogar den Orthodoxen, der das Theater überhaupt flieht, weil er es als einen ‘*lieu de perdition*’ ansieht, zu entwaffnen.

—Wenn die bildliche Illustration der heiligen Schrift keine Entweihung ist, warum sollte es die dramatische sein?

“Wenn nun ein derartiges Unternehmen in's Leben treten würde—selbst nur für die Meisterwerke unserer Classiker (in der oben ange deuteten Umarbeitung)—es wäre damit schon gewiss ein genügend reiches Material für lange Zeit vorhanden. Doch aber scheint es mir wünschenswerth, dass unsere jetzigen Componisten sich auch mit dieser Kunstgattung beschäftigten und das Material ferner bereicherten. Sie müssen sich indess klar bewusst werden, dass es nicht allein der Stoff ist, der ihr Werk zur ‘Geistlichen Oper’ stempelt, sondern dass es wesentlich der musikalische Styl sein muss (wie z. B. breitere Formen der Musikstücke, mehr Polyphonie, erhabendere Declamation als in der weltlichen Oper), ja selbst der Stoff musste nach anderen Gesetzen als den für die weltlichen Opern geltenden behandelt werden—es erfordert nicht unbedingt überreiche Handlung, es kann und muss mehr Gewicht gelegt werden auf den Ausdruck der Stimmungen—ein Bild, ein dramatischer Moment darf oft für einen ganzen Act genügen. Die grössere Aus-



dehnung der Gebete, Klagen, Danksagungen, des Jubels ist hier im Gegensatz zu parallelen Formen in der weltlichen Oper Bedingung: Ort, Zeit und Handlungseinheiten sind hier nicht Gesetz. Stimmung erwecken, Stimmung, ich möchte sagen geistlicher Art, ist Ziel und Zweck.

“Von schon vorhandenen Opern mit Unterlage biblischer Stoffe ist vielleicht nur der *Joseph* von Méhul passend für die ‘geistliche Oper’; alle anderen nicht, weil ihre musikalische Ausdrucksweise eine zu weltliche ist, und die Behandlung der Stoffe den Gesetzen der weltlichen Oper zu sehr entspricht, z. B. durch Einschaltung von Liebesscenen, die in der heiligen Schrift nicht angedeutet sind. Diese sind aber durchaus nicht als principiell ausgeschlossen zu betrachten—sie dürfen nur nicht erdichtet, sondern müssen die im Stoffe vorhandenen sein, z. B. Judith und Holofernes, Sampson und Dalila, das hohe Lied und viele andere; sogar Ballet, insofern es im Stoff angedeutet ist zulässig, darf aber nicht den modernen Balletrhythmen wie Wälzer, Polka und anderen entsprechen, sondern muss das orientalische Colorit an sich tragen.

“Das Repertoire der geistlichen Theater wird nur den Stoffen nach ein begrenztes den Musikalischen Compositionen nach aber unbegrenztes sein, da hier nicht, wie im weltlichen Theater, das In-Musiksetzen eines schon einmal (namentlich wenn mit Erfolg) componirten Stoffes ausgeschlossen ist. Im Gegentheil denselben Stoff können verschiedene Componisten immer wieder bearbeiten und aufführen ohne fürchten zu müssen, vom Publicum des schon einmal componirten Stoffes halber abgewiesen zu werden. Nicht die Neuheit des Stoffes hat hier zu interessiren, sondern die Behandlung desselben, und der ihm verliehene musikalische Ausdruck. Und so erschien mir das Bestehen eines geistlichen Theaters neben einem weltlichen in der ganzen cultivirten Welt, in jeder grösseren theaterfähigen Stadt nicht nur ein Mögliches, sondern sogar ein Nothwendiges—sind doch Oratorien überall an der Tagesordnung, es bedarf eben der Verpflanzung vom Concertsaal auf die Bühne; es muss nicht mehr erzählt, sondern dargestellt werden.

“Mit dieser Idee trage ich mich seit länger denn fünfundzwanzig Jahren. Ich habe Manches zur Verwirklichung derselben versucht und in

ihrem Interesse mit vielen hervorragenden und einflussreichen Persönlichkeiten gesprochen.

“ Ich war—unter manchen anderen Plänen—auch der Meinung, dass der regierende Fürst eines kleinen deutschen Landes die Idee ergreifen solle, findet sich doch gerade da oft ausgesprochene Künstliche und Pflege. Aber der Grossherzog von Weimar meinte, dass er sich die Ausführung eines solchen Planes, wenn überhaupt, nur in ganz grossen Städten möglich dünkte. Ein anderes Mal dachte ich an Berlin, als an ein Centrum der Civilization und des Kunstlebens. Der damalige Minister von Mühler—an ihn hatte ich mich gewandt weil dem Cultusminister nun doch einmal alles ‘Geistliche’ zunächst angeht—sagte mir, dass er meine Idee nur für das alte, nicht aber für das neue Testament gelten lassen könne, auch müsse sich die Privatunternehmung der Sache bemächtigen, der Staat könne sich nicht damit befassen. Weiter meinte ich in England einem günstigen Boden für meine Hoffnung zu finden, da dort mehr als selbst in Deutschland das Oratorium gepflegt wird. Der ‘Dean of Westminster,’ Stanley sagte mir er könne sich dieser Idee nur in volksthümlicher Weise ver-

wirklicht denken; er würde sie auf dem Markte in der Bretterbude am Platz finden!—Eine Zeitlang versuchte ich um wenigstens einen Anfang zu finden, meinen Plan vorläufig nur auf alttestamentarischem Boden zu stellen, das neue Testament noch auszuschliessen, und wandte mich so an die Spitzen der Jüdischen Gemeinde in Paris. Diese wollten meine Pläne finanziell gern unterstützen, schreckten aber vor der dann für das Publicum als von ihnen ausgehenden moralischen Initiative zurück. Ja, sogar an Amerika dachte ich, an die kühnen unternehmungslustigen transatlantischen Impresarien, die aus meinen Ideen eine Riesenspeculation machen sollten—fast wäre die Sache dort gelungen, aber der Mangel an Künstlern bewirkte dass der schon weit gediehene Plan wieder fallen gelassen werden musste. Selbst eine Künstler-Association hielt ich dieses Unternehmen selber leiten würde, geistig materiell und administrativ dafür arbeiten sollte, aber die grosse Schwierigkeit eine grössere Anzahl von Künstlern für eine neue Idee in der musikalischen Kunst zu gewinnen, hat mich auch von diesem Vorhaben zurückgeschreckt.

“ So habe ich denn selbst mein Gedanken an

die Bühne entstandenes, *Verlorenes Paradies* zuerst als Oratorium erscheinen lassen, später aber, von der nie ganz aufgegebenen Idee wieder angetrieben, das Werk geändert ihm doch die dramatische Form gegeben und es 'geistliche Oper' genannt. Ebenso ergings mir mit dem *Thurmbau*. Und da ich die Hoffnung auch heute nicht aufgebe dass mein Plan früher oder später einmal wird aufgenommen werden so schreibe ich meinen *Kain und Abel*, *Moses*, *Das hohe Lied* und *Christus* in dieser Weise—ob der Tag der scenischen Darstellung kommen möge oder nicht—gleichviel!

ANT. RUBINSTEIN."

*Translation.*

VERY HONOURED SIR,—I have been asked several times and by different people what I meant and understood by the title "Sacred Opera," which I gave to my compositions *Paradise Lost* and *The Tower of Babel*. I have often answered this question verbally, but also wished, having been often asked to do so, to treat the subject in writing; but before I had decided what form I should give to my thoughts, whether I should express them in a

pamphlet, a book, or a newspaper article, your honoured letter came inviting me to contribute something to your work *Vor den Coulissen*. I willingly seize the opportunity to answer the question—although but lightly—in some points, the title of your book being so fitting for what I have to offer.

. . . . .

The Oratorio is an art form which I have always been disposed to protest against. The best known masterpieces of this form have (not during the study of them, but when hearing them performed) always left me cold; indeed, often positively pained me. The stiffness of the musical, and still more of the poetical, form always seems to me absolutely incongruous with the high dramatic feeling of the subject. To see and hear gentlemen in dress coats, white cravats, yellow gloves, holding music-books before them, or ladies in modern, often extravagant, toilets singing the parts of the grand imposing figures of the Old and New Testaments has always disturbed me to such a degree that I could never attain to pure enjoyment. Involuntarily I felt and thought how much grander, more impressive, vivid, and true would be all I

had experienced in the concert-room if represented on the stage with costumes, decorations, and full action. For this end, of course, the texts would have to exchange their present narrative form for a dramatic one—a work which does not seem to me difficult, and which would in no case injure the music.

I cannot agree with the tenet that biblical subjects are inappropriate to the stage because of their sacredness. It would surely be a *testimonium paupertatis* and a slight to the theatre, which instead should serve the highest purposes of culture. In picture galleries, to take a parallel case, the Sixtine Madonna is the only work I know of which has a room all to itself; other sacred pictures of the greatest masters often hang near “Tap-rooms” of Teniers, and this does not spoil the effect of either the one or the other.

The popular demand for the exhibition of sacred subjects on the stage is shown from the Mystery-plays of the Middle Ages, and we know the great impression which at the present day is made on all at Ober Ammergau, notwithstanding the often naïve music; how great an impression, then, should the works of Bach,

Handel, Mendelssohn, and others make when dramatically rendered! To take a somewhat analogous case, what a fine solemnising effect is produced on one by the transparencies accompanied by the singing of the *a capella* of the Cathedral Choir, periodically exhibited in the Berlin Academy of Arts.

The opinion that representation of sacred subjects on the stage would be a profanation of them being one so general that it cannot be put out of view, I have thought of a particular species of art which would find place in a special theatre to be built for this purpose. This species of art should be named, in contradistinction to the secular, the "sacred" opera, its theatre the sacred theatre, with specially trained artists and chorus, and special rules and regulations for the public. It should, in fact, be "a church of art."

It would be a total misapprehension of this idea if any one were to see in it an expedient chosen by me for the propagation or advancement of Church interests and aims. For me the question is solely an art one, and one which appears to me beautiful, noble, and worthy of realisation, apart from all other interests or questions.



I am well aware of the difficulties which this problem offers, but they do not appear to me insurmountable.

1. The question of money need scarcely be considered, for the novelty of the scheme, its absolute originality, would of necessity, if once started, bring in a large income.

2. Neither does the artist question offer any great difficulties. We have no lack of soloists able to devote themselves to this new art form; in fact, sacred opera would be a blessing to a great number of singers of both sexes, since there are many of them, even able ones, who have no employment; and then, were the idea once taken up, many, according to their individual taste, would cultivate their talents specially for this *genre*.

3. Then, too, scenical difficulties nowadays need hardly be considered, seeing the enormous advances that stage machinery and decoration have made, and are daily making. Of course, the architect, constructor, and decorator would have to consider how best the theatre should be arranged for this special *genre*. Being myself a layman, I cannot work out the details here, but I imagine it would be necessary to make an essential change in the form of the theatre, alike

in the orchestra and the auditorium. Even in building the stage it would have to be remembered that many subjects require the threefold division of the scene—Heaven, Hell, and Earth.

4. The difficulties for the chorus, the polyphonus singing (as in fugues) by heart, are by no means insignificant; but the choruses nowadays overcome in our modern operas musical difficulties which are hardly less serious (and then, of course, the salary would be greater the greater the difficulty). A serious difficulty, that of singing in time with each other during the acting, can be obviated by resort to the modern and highly desirable expedient of employing supernumeraries as far as possible, and reducing to a minimum the action of those who are to sing.

These four principal difficulties being got over, the thing itself seems to me technically practicable. I figure to myself a theatre in which the most important occurrences of both Testaments would be represented in chronological order, in a manner answering to the highest claims of art. The events as well as the personalities of both are so imposing, so beautiful, and so poetical that a visible presentation of them on the stage with the help of

all the arts could not fail to win the gratitude of the public, to interest the sceptic, and to disarm even that special class of persons who avoid the theatre because in their eyes it is a *lieu de perdition*. If the illustration of Holy Scripture by means of painting is no profanation, why then should the dramatic method be so?

If now such an enterprise were to be realised—were it only for the masterpieces of our classic authors (after the manner I have already mentioned)—we should surely have rich material enough for a long time to hand; still I think it desirable that our composers of to-day should occupy themselves with this species of art, and further enrich its material. But they would have to understand, and clearly too, that it is not the subject alone which marks their work as being “sacred opera,” but that it must be so constituted, essentially, by its musical style (as, for instance, broader forms, more polyphony, a declamation more elevated and solemn than in secular opera). The material itself also would have to be treated on other principles; it does not require great dramatic gesture; more weight should and must be laid on the expression of dispositions; one tableau and one dramatic mo-

ment may often suffice for a whole act. The greater prolongation of prayers, lamentations, thanksgivings, and rejoicings, which in secular opera would be a fault, is here a necessity; the ordinary dramatic laws no longer hold good. The aim and purpose would be to produce a frame of mind, a spiritual frame.

Of existing operas based on biblical materials the *Joseph* of Mehul is perhaps the only one which is adapted for sacred opera; in all the others the musical expression is too worldly, and the treatment of materials too much in accordance with the rules of secular opera, as, for instance, by the addition of love scenes, which are not indicated in Scripture. These indeed must not be considered as excluded; only they must not be invented, but must be such as already exist in the texts—for instance, Judith and Holofernes, Samson and Delilah, Canticles, and many others; even ballets, so far as they are indicated by the narrative, are admissible—of course not with the modern ballet-rhythms, such as waltz, polka, and other forms, but with true oriental colouring.

The repertoire of the sacred drama would be limited in subjects, but, as regards rendering

of these, unlimited ; because a subject has been used by one composer and given with success, another need not be precluded from using the same subject, as in the secular drama. On the contrary, different composers can always work on the same subject without any fear that the public may reject it because the subject has been already used, for it is not the novelty of the subject that has to interest here, but the treatment of it and the musical expression it receives.

And so the existence of a sacred drama in conjunction with the secular throughout the whole cultivated world, in every town which is able to have a theatre, seems to me not only possible but necessary. Are not oratorios everywhere the order of the day? Oratorio wants but a transplantation from the concert-hall to the stage. It should no longer be related ; it should be represented.

I have had this idea for more than twenty-five years ; I have put forth many efforts for its realisation, and have spoken in its behalf with many prominent and influential persons. I once thought, amongst other plans, that the reigning prince of some little German State might seize the idea, for one finds in such places very

often a practical love and care for art ; but the Grand Duke of Weimar thought the execution of such a plan, if possible at all, would be so only in large towns. At another time I thought of Berlin as being a centre of civilisation and art. I was informed by the then minister of worship, Von Mühler,—for all that concerns sacred affairs must be sent in the first instance to the minister of cultus,—that he could let my idea pass only for the Old Testament, not for the New, but that the State could not take it up.

Next, I thought I might find a more favourable soil for my hopes in England, as there oratorio is cultivated more than even in Germany ; but Dean Stanley, of Westminster, told me he could only believe this feasible in a popular way—that to his thinking its proper place was at the markets and fairs.

For some time I tried, in order to make at least a beginning, to apply my plan, at first only to the Old Testament, excluding the New, and I turned to the heads of the Jewish community in Paris. They were glad to support my plan financially, but did not wish the public to suppose that the initiative had come from them. Yes, I even thought of America, of the bold

and enterprising Transatlantic impresarios who would be able to make such a magnificent speculation out of my ideas, and in fact the thing had almost succeeded, until the dearth of artists caused the already well-developed plan to fall to the ground. I even thought of an artist association to conduct this enterprise, working for it intellectually, materially, and administratively; but the difficulty of gaining over any considerable number of artists for a new musical idea frightened me from this design.

So, thinking of the stage, I wrote my *Paradise Lost*, then remodelled it for the concert-hall as an oratorio, and finally, instigated by the idea which I have never given up, I gave it the dramatic form of sacred opera. The same thing was done with *The Tower of Babel*; and as I do not even now give up the hope that my plan will, earlier or later, be taken up, I am writing in this way my *Cain and Abel*, *Sulamith*, *Moses*, *Christus*, whether the day of representation comes or not—no matter.

ANT. RUBINSTEIN.

When Rubinstein's letter appeared it excited much surprise and controversy; the leading musical journals copied it, and criticised it, some

giving the composer's idea a severe handling, for all rushed to the conclusion that were this idea taken up, then good-bye to the grand old form of oratorio.

Nothing, however, could be more absurd. Sacred opera never will and never can usurp the place of oratorio ; and why should it ? there is room and need for both in the field of art. Rubinstein, full of his idea like all reformers, never takes this into consideration, although it were better for his idea had he done so ; he finds oratorio stiff : it annoys him, he tells us, and therefore he would banish it altogether, regardless of the tastes of the many who revere and love it. A mistake, but then Rubinstein is not a man when full of an idea to pick and choose his words.

At the same time there are his opponents who raise their hands in pious horror over sacred opera. " Sacred subjects in a theatre ! how horrible," they cry ; and yet if one were to inquire " Why horrible ? " they would be at a loss for a clear and logical answer.

This, the state of our theatres, is one of the disgraces of our nineteenth century, and of nineteen centuries of Christianity ; for the theatre,



the great school of morality with the Greeks, till the degradation that fell on it from the time of Pericles, and at an earlier date their Church, with us is but a happy hunting-ground of the *roué* and the courtesan. Why is it so? and, because it is so, must we blame the theatre? Rather let us examine Rubinstein's idea, and make use of it. Let us look to our theatres, let us reform them, or at least a few of them, and restore them to their original purity.

The benefit to society would be immense. Of course individual taste is individual taste, and who can quarrel with it? There would be many who would remain at home rather than witness a stage representation of Scripture, but there would be many more who would flock to a sacred theatre to learn and enjoy; and, therefore, why should these be prohibited from having sacred opera because oratorio holds the field? Surely there is room for both. And although sacred opera ought not to supersede oratorio, and certainly cannot, that is no reason why the two should not be allowed to flourish together.

It will be interesting to watch the progress of sacred opera, for that it will come of itself with time is a certainty; but with time the originator

of the idea will be no longer among us to guide his idea on its first perilous way to realisation.

As a medium for educating the people, although Rubinstein so grandly disdains all this, there exist no means comparable to the stage, no place where the human passions are so worked upon for good or evil; and yet plain as this must be to every thinking individual, the modern enigma of its application is that to-day our theatres are used solely for the latter purpose.

That there are some amongst the exoteric few capable of grasping morality through meditation and instruction no one denies; but that there are many more who grasp it only through *operatic* means, the ranting and raving of tearful Methodism, the shrieking of Salvation Army soldiers, the thousands of hardened hearts melted to compassion by the pictured agonies of Christ, all prove.

In the slums of London there are thousands of wretched human beings who are born and live and die as dogs do, without any other idea in their famine-worn brains than to prey on each other and on the world at large, ignorant throughout their miserable lives of redemption, of Christ, even of God.

Here is a site for such, "Eine Kirche der Kunst," as Rubinstein would have "Eine Kirche der Kunst" for the people, an influence that would reach where the tract and the voice in the pulpit never do, and never can.

The nearest approach to the sacred opera of Rubinstein is the decennial Passion Play at Ober Ammergau, lovingly although rudely got up ; and the author of that most interesting sketch, *Art in the Mountains*, gives the following description :—

" But (and because nothing we can ever say will persuade many readers that the ' Passions-spiel ' at Ober Ammergau is a good and right thing to do) let us not trust individual impressions, but rather record the truth drawn from individual sources, that to many minds the fact of having once seen the events recorded in Gospel narrative pass before their eyes has done more to impress the Scripture narrative on them than a life of teaching."

This surely is a far-reaching argument for sacred opera and its benefit to thousands, written by one who has witnessed but a very feeble attempt at sacred opera ; whilst another writer, a clergyman and a correspondent of the

*Times*, the Rev. Malcolm M'Coll, M.A., writes openly in his letter to that paper:—

“ I have never seen so affecting a spectacle, *nor one more calculated to draw out the best and purest feelings of the heart.*”

Further on he adds: “ *We are apt to forget that the deepest and most lasting impressions are generally those which reach the mind through the eye.* A good portrait of an absent friend gives a far better idea of him than the most brilliant verbal description, and this is true in a special sense of minds not accustomed to trains of reasoning. By means of images printed on the eye, their minds will grasp in a few hours a whole series of facts which it would take months, perhaps years, to convey to the understanding without the aid of pictorial representation, and even then the impression will not be half so real nor so enduring as that which passes through the avenues of the senses. Here, in a single day, the history and destiny of the human race were engrained on the minds and hearts of some thousands of persons in a way they are never likely to forget. I do not say, *though I think it highly probable*, that the same effect could not be produced by means

of written or oral instruction, but I say without hesitation *that it could not be produced for years.*

“I am not ashamed to confess, for my own part, that *I have realised here with a vividness I have never felt before* the marvellous unity which binds together the Old Testament with the New.”

If this, then, is the effect on a minister of the Gospel of the rude representation of Ober Ammergau, what would not the effect be of such a “Kirche der Kunst” as Rubinstein would have on the careless and the indifferent, on the thousands of youths our present-day-enlightened professors of science are leading into the mire of scepticism and doubt, or at best into the not less harmful indifference of utilitarianism?

Here surely is the antidote to all this—here the influence to guide the masses into those beautiful paths that even a Schopenhauer must praise—the paths that follow up the virtue which Christians value as a state of happiness, and philosophers as the highest good.

Were sacred drama or sacred opera an innovation of the age, then we might well pause before it; but though the leaders of the early

Church freely denounced the heathen plays of the Greeks and Romans, they never decried the theatres as such, although in their time these had been degraded from their first great perfection and perverted. Aristophanes and his brilliant mockery had been one of the chief causes of this, for to please the taste of the people, at the expense of everything noble and great, instead of elevating it, was his aim.

The miracle-plays fell for the same reason.

History tells us what the effects of the terrible tragedies of Sophocles were ; it tells us also of that enigma of all times, the condemnation of Socrates through the *Clouds* of Aristophanes. Nearer our own time it shows us what Beaumarchais and his *Figaro* could do in France. And what more is needed to prove the influence of the theatre on the lives and thoughts of men ?

Rubinstein, however, disdains all this. The whole question with him is an art one ; but even above this question lies one greater, and that not the benefit to art, but the benefit to humanity.

## CHAPTER VIII

### “SULAMITH”—HISTORICAL CONCERTS

AFTER Rubinstein had launched his novel idea of sacred opera, he set about composing *Sulamith*, the music of which is perhaps the most lovely of anything he has written. And on this account it is all the more to be regretted that the great composer should have run counter to the prejudices of a large portion of the public by taking one of the most ideal and beautiful Christian allegories for the voluptuous reality of a love song.

Of course Rubinstein is a believer in M. Renan, and belongs to the new school of biblical interpreters; but if Jerome fifteen centuries ago, with access to sacred manuscripts and traditions long since lost, has erred in his conception of Solomon's Song, the new school of philosophers, without the enjoyment of any of these advant-

ages, can hardly be expected to be in a position to remove his error—nay, they can only add to it; and the majority who view the question so—quite apart from those who are bigoted—will always look askance at the libretto of this opera, and censure Rubinstein's questionable taste in selecting it.

*Sulamith* was given on the 8th November 1883 at Hamburg, under Rubinstein's own direction.

Before this, however, Rubinstein's most interesting letter to Bartholf Senff, the music publisher of Leipzig, with reference to the request of the latter that Rubinstein would edit a complete set of the classics, appeared in the April number of the *Leipzig Signale*.

Rubinstein's answer was remarkable. After pointing out the many apparently accurate readings of the great masters, and the impossibility of knowing not only how a passage should be played, but the all-important question of *tempi*, he declined, inasmuch as he considered it sacrilege for any person to meddle or interfere with the classics and present them in any one dress, necessarily the personality, pure and simple, of the editor; but he suggested that



if Herr Senff wished to form a council of learned musicians to discuss and decide all vexed questions, he very willingly would give all assistance in his power.

In January (1883) Rubinstein, in one of his concert tours, conducted his fifth symphony in G minor at Leipzig, and the summer of the same year at Peterhof his one-act comic opera *Der Papagai* and the "Eroica Fantasia" for orchestra, Op. 110, were composed.

*Der Papagai* was given the next year (1884) at Hamburg, in November, with complete success, and early the same year the "Eroica Fantasia" was played under the composer's direction in St. Petersburg.

Almost the entire year 1885 Rubinstein was moving about giving concerts and conducting his works.

In January he was in Moscow; in February he conducted his *Tower of Babel* in Leipzig at the Gewandhaus Concerts, playing himself Beethoven's E flat concerto.

Early in March he was in Frankfort-on-the-Main, where he conducted his *Paradise Lost*, directing his own "Dramatic Symphony" in D minor at the Museums Gesellschaft Con-

certs, and playing the G minor concerto of Beethoven.

He then went on a tour in Holland, was in Vienna in April, thence returning to Russia.

In Peterhof this year the A minor symphony was written, his sixth; and meantime Rubinstein was preparing his arduous programme for the great historical concerts.

These were given at Berlin, Vienna, St. Petersburg, Moscow, Paris, and London. They embraced the entire literature of the pianoforte, and consisted of seven recitals, the programmes being the following :—

#### RECITAL I

<i>Byrd.</i>	Carmen's Whistle.
<i>Bull, J.</i>	The King's Hunting Jig.
<i>Couperin.</i>	La Ténébreuse, La Favorite, La Fleurie, Le Bavolet Flottant, La Bandoline, Le Reveil Matin.
<i>Rameau, J. R.</i>	Le Rapel des Oisiseaux, La Poule, Gavotte et Variations.
<i>Scarlatti, D.</i>	Fugue du Chat. Sonata A dur.
<i>Bach, J. S.</i>	Fantaisie Chromatique. Gigue B dur. Sarabande et Gavotte.

- Bach, J. S.* Prelude et Fugue, C moll, D dur.  
Prelude E moll, E dur, E moll.
- Handel.* Harmonious Blacksmith, Air and Variations.  
Fugue E moll.  
Sarabande et Passacaille.  
Gigue, A dur.  
Aria con Variazioni, D moll.
- Bach, Ph. E.* Rondo, H moll.  
La Xenophone, Sibylle, Les Langueurs tendres.  
La Complainte.
- Haydn, J.* Theme et Variations, F moll.
- Mozart, W. A.* Fantasie, C minor.  
Gigue, G major.  
Rondo, A minor.  
Alla turca.

## RECITAL II

- Beethoven.* Sonaten, Op. 27, Op. 31, Op. 53, Op. 57,  
Op. 91, Op. 101, Op. 109, Op. 111.

## RECITAL III

- Schubert.* Op. 94, 2 Momens Musicales.  
Minuet, Op. 9, Impromptu.
- Weber.* Op. 12, Moment Capriccioso.  
Op. 65, Invitation à la Valse.  
Op. 72, Pollaca E dur.
- Mendelssohn.* Variations Sérieuses.  
Op. 16, Caprice E moll.  
Songs without words, H dur, A minor.

- Mendelssohn.* Venetian Gondellied, A dur, E dur, H moll.  
 E dur, A dur, E dur, F dur.  
 Volkslied. F moll.  
 Scherzo e Capriccioso. F moll.

## RECITAL IV

- Schumann.* Op. 17, Fantasia C dur.  
 Kreisleriana.  
 Études Symphoniques.  
 Sonata F moll.  
 Fantasia Stücke : Des Abends.  
   In der Nacht.  
   Traumeswirren.  
   Warum.  
 Op. 82, Vogel als Prophet.  
 Romance D minor.  
 Carnival.

## RECITAL V

- Field.* Nocturnes, E major, A major, B dur.  
*Moscheles.* Op. 95, Conte Enfantine.  
*Henselt.* Et Oiseau Jetuis, Étude.  
*Thalberg.* Op. 54, Étude A moll.  
*Liszt.* Consolation, D dur, E dur.  
           Au bord d'une Source.  
           La Gita in Gondola.  
           Auf dem Wasser zu Singen (Lied Schubert).  
           Serenade (Lied Schubert).  
           Erl König (Lied Schubert).  
           Soirées de Vienne.  
           Étude de concert, D major.

# RECITAL VI

<i>Fantasie.</i>	Op. 49, F moll.
<i>Preludes.</i>	E moll.
	A dur.
	A dur.
	B moll.
	D dur.
	D moll.
<i>Mazurkas.</i>	H moll.
	F moll.
	C dur.
	B moll.
<i>Balladen.</i>	G moll, F dur.
	A dur, F moll.
<i>Impromptu.</i>	F moll.
	C dur.
<i>Nocturnes.</i>	D dur.
	G dur.
	C moll.
<i>Scherzo.</i>	H moll.
<i>Barcarolle.</i>	
<i>Valse.</i>	A dur.
	H moll.
	A dur.
<i>Sonata.</i>	B moll.
<i>Berceuse.</i>	
<i>Polonaises.</i>	Ces moll.
	C moll.
	A dur.

## RECITAL VII

<i>Chopin.</i>	Étude, A dur. F moll. E dur. C moll. E moll. E dur. H moll. A dur. A moll. Ces moll. C moll.
<i>Glinka.</i>	Tarantella.
<i>Balakireff.</i>	Islamey. Fantasie Orientale.
<i>Tchaikowsky.</i>	Chant sans Paroles. Waltz Scherzo. Romance, F moll. Scherzo à la Russe.
<i>Rubinstein, N.</i>	Teuslet N Album. Op. 16, Waltz.

This gigantic undertaking — played, too, from memory—Rubinstein finished at London, June 1886, meaning it to be his last appearance on European concert platforms as pianist, and a final farewell to that wonderful career which has been one of the most brilliant things the musical world has known this century.

During this cycle of concerts, and when in

Paris, Rubinstein became ill ; fortunately the indisposition proved to be only temporary and slight, though at the time sufficiently alarming to his friends, for the great pianist-composer not only enjoys extraordinary health, but has never been seriously ill during his whole life. He quickly recovered, and returned to Peterhof in the June of 1886, to be welcomed with heartfelt enthusiasm by his many admirers there.

This summer he commenced his great sacred oratorio *Moses*, and in the winter he went to St. Petersburg and conducted the symphony concerts to the immense delight of the whole musical world there.

Only those who know the great concert-hall where these symphony concerts are given, the *Salle de Noblesse* as it is called, can have any idea of the brilliant scene ; for from one end to another the immense apartment was packed, and never, as under Rubinstein, have the immortal symphonies of Beethoven, Schubert, and Schumann been so given or so listened to.

During his conductorship cordons of mounted police were stationed along the streets to regulate the tremendous carriage-traffic, and

the most brilliant season of these concerts was that of 1886-87, when Rubinstein wielded the baton, and sent orchestra and audience alike into ecstasies, through his own great musical genius.



## CHAPTER IX

### RUBINSTEIN IN ST. PETERSBURG

IN the spring of 1887 Rubinstein was formally invited to reassume the direction of the Conservatory, and after a slight delay he accepted from the autumn of the same year, provided he was given not only full but absolute direction in everything, the right to act as he chose, without a voice being raised; in short, for the Conservatory a reign of autocracy.

This was of course joyfully acceded to, and Rubinstein spent the spring at the Conservatory, "a chiel amang them takin' notes," to the coming dire disaster of many.

The summer he spent at Peterhof making plans, writing his sixth symphony, Op. 111, in A minor, given first in Leipzig, composing his last opera, *Goruscha*, and finishing the first four books of *Moses*. In the autumn he took up his

residence at St. Petersburg, and formally assumed the direction of the Conservatory. All winter the press was busy printing letters on the subject, and the Conservatory itself was one scene of *tshisto scandals*,<sup>1</sup> as the Russians say, for Rubinstein not only turned away pupils, and completely altered the programme of study, but also sent off professors and gave others lower places.

That all this was necessary is beyond question, for Rubinstein has something better to do than raise tempests about his head; and further, an artist and composer of world-wide renown, with thousands of impresarios beseeching him to accept their plans, could have no motive to sit down in the chair of a conservatory directorship and needlessly make work for himself; but Rubinstein, with characteristic impetuosity, went at the thing with one fell sweep, so that the whole of St. Petersburg connected with the Conservatory was in *one* uproar and in *two* parties. However, Rubinstein's word was law; things regulated themselves as he pleased. He took four pianoforte students under his own

<sup>1</sup> Clean scandals would be the literal translation, the meaning being complete scandals, great scandals.

care, and twice in the week had a teachers' class, when he went *seriatim* through the entire literature of the pianoforte, and by the spring things had so quieted down, and the Conservatory was so bowed in adoration before its illustrious director, that even the most quarrelsome became still.

In 1887, amidst all the strife, Rubinstein had the honour of becoming a grandfather, his only daughter Anna presenting him with a grandchild—an honour, however, the great pianist-composer good-humouredly grumbled at; and in the summer of 1888 he went for the summer to Peterhof to finish *Goruscha*, and commence the fifth and sixth books of *Moses*, having paid his annual visit to his mother, now an old lady of over seventy, living at Odessa, and wrapped up of course in her illustrious son Anton.

The beginning of the season of 1888-89 saw Rubinstein again at his post in the Conservatory, and during this season he gave semi-public recitals there to the pianoforte pupils and a select few who were lucky enough to gain admittance.

Anything to equal these musical feasts would

be impossible to have ; Rubinstein was almost invariably in the best of humours, enthusiastic and full of fire, in love with the music he was interpreting, and in his remarks to the pupils delightfully witty and learned. At these lecture recitals, as they were termed, he went *seriatim* through the whole series of pianoforte literature, beginning at our Elizabethan composers, Byrd, Bull, Gibbons, playing all the early masters of the French and Italian schools, when finally the Bachs were reached, after which came Handel, Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, Schubert, Weber, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Chopin, Thalberg, and Liszt.

They were golden nights, passing all too quickly. All applause was forbidden, but now and again bursting enthusiasm could not be restrained, and a cheer would simultaneously rise from every throat. Rubinstein would rush off the platform shaking his head and his hands and laughing, and doing his best to look angry at the flagrant disobedience to his orders, when in reality even he himself must have been ready to cry "bravo !" to his own wonderful playing. All this terminated on the 14th of May, when the incomparable pianist was presented

with an address in carved silver enclosed in a frame of dark plush, which now hangs in the concert-hall of the Conservatory.

The same season that most incomprehensible of all incomprehensible things occurred with *Kalaschnikoff*. This opera, as before mentioned, was produced in 1878, and withdrawn immediately on account of the painful effect created by the hanging of the Merchant Kalaschnikoff in St. Petersburg at the particular time of its first representation.

The present Tsar, however, had seen this representation, and been so struck with it, that after ten years he still remembered it; and when the repertoire was presented for his inspection in the beginning of the season 1888-89, he not only with his own hand wrote it down in the list, but also added *Nero*, striking out two other operas of different composers to make room for them. When the time for representing *Kalaschnikoff* came, however, rumours were afloat that it was to be withdrawn for political reasons, and when the day came before the general rehearsal Rubinstein received a letter stating that the opera was not to proceed. So astonished were some of the composer's friends that they

spoke of it to the Tsar, and hinted darkly at intrigue—not the political ideas of the play, which those who knew the opera denied to be objectionable, but personal intrigue against Rubinstein—being the cause which had induced various *chinovniks* to represent the opera as being impossible to render.

This was enough for Alexander III., for no more honest and straightforward sovereign has ever sat on the throne of Russia ; and he summarily arranged to judge between his contending subjects by having for himself a complete representation of the opera, to which the public were not admitted. This took place, and the next order that came from his Imperial Majesty was that there was nothing objectionable in the opera, and that it was to be placed on the repertoire of the opera-house for the season. This was a severe blow for the enemies of the gifted composer, and a correspondingly sweet triumph for his friends ; the opera was accordingly given.

It had a splendid success, for not only is the music magnificent, rich, gorgeous in melody, and striking in its Russian-tone colour, but the *tout ensemble* of *Kalaschnikoff* is one superb climax of dramatic power. Three representa-

tions had been given, when the astounding intelligence came that the opera was by the Tsar's orders again withdrawn, M. Pobedenostzev and the Russian Metropolitan having taken objection to the first act, in which a prayer and at the same time an orgie with Ivan, in both cases central figures, take place.

So again the opera has been laid aside, and certainly the art-world has little reason to be grateful to M. Pobedenostzev and to the Metropolitan therefor. It is also the greatest pity in the world that when writing this opera Rubinstein and his librettist were so artless as to present in all its reality and completeness an unpleasant historical truth, and we can only hope, now that Rubinstein is an "excellency"—he was made so in the spring of 1888—that he will be courtier enough to rewrite *Kalaschnikoff*, and present it and its historical truths in a dress to suit the holy synod and Russian requirements, for *Kalaschnikoff* and its music are much too beautiful to be lost.

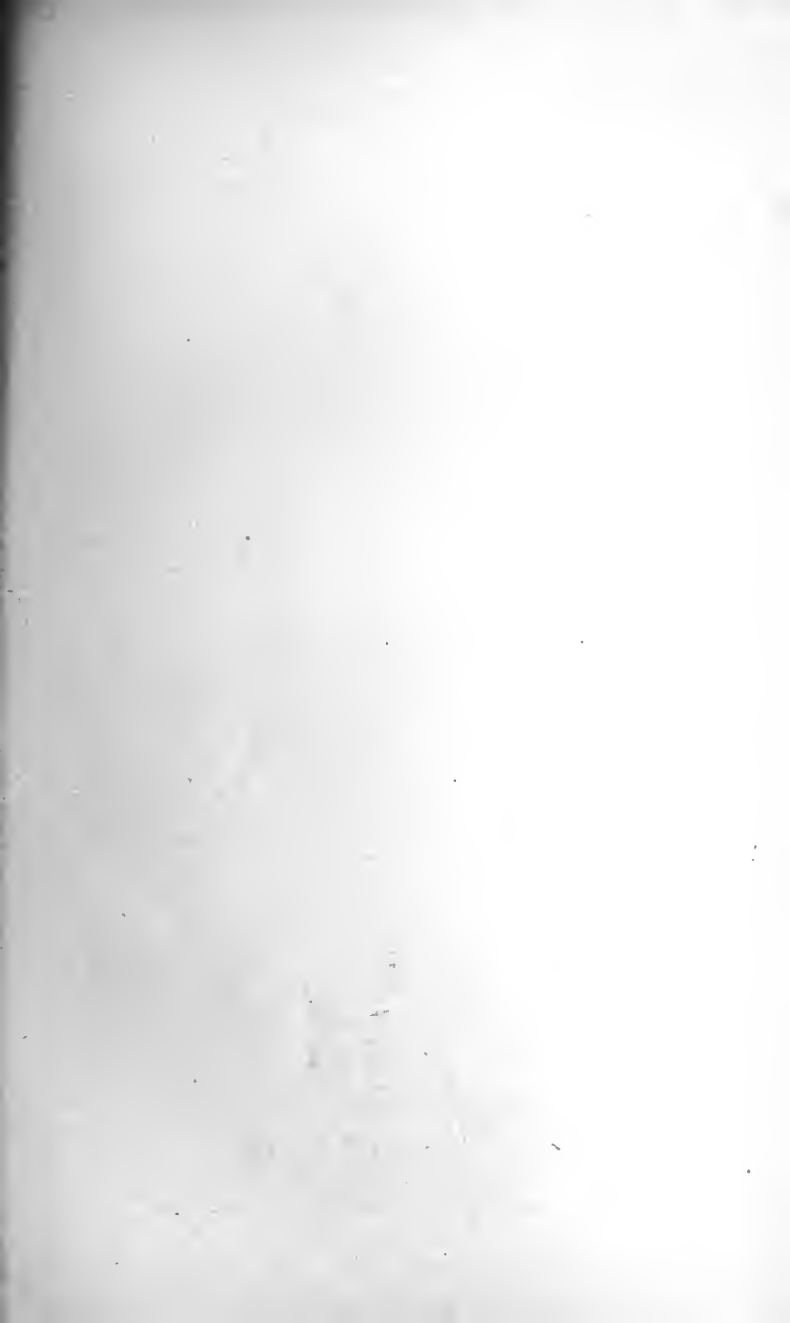
In the summer at Peterhof of this same year 1889 came the anniversary of Rubinstein's début at Moscow on the 23d of July 1839, and the great pianist was honoured with quite an ovation.

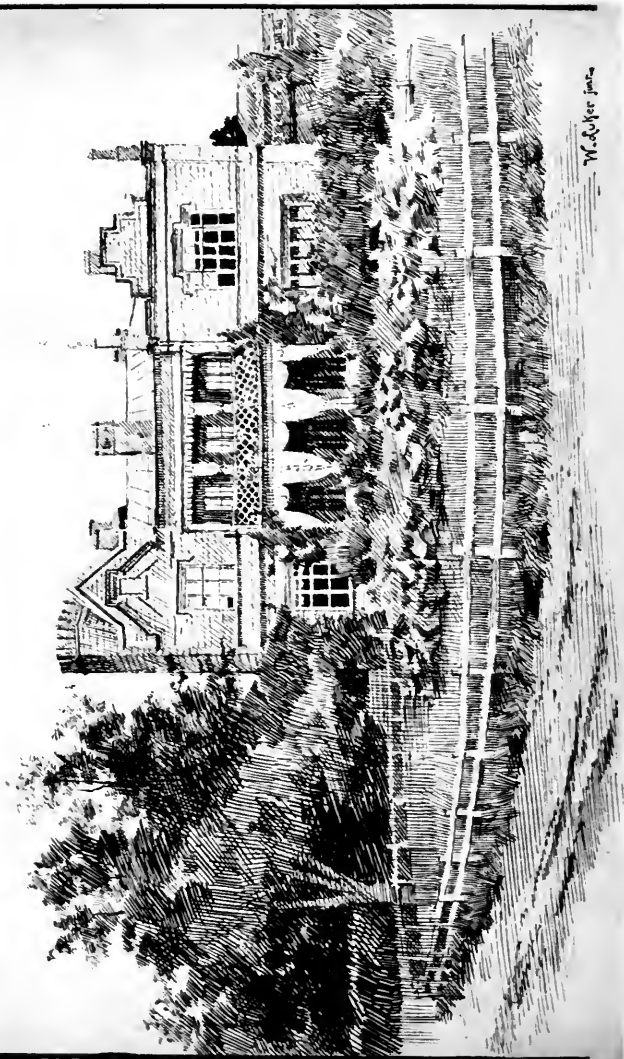
On this occasion telegrams from all parts of the world were received by the great composer, the Tsar sending a particularly flattering one. And on the composer attending at the palace to thank his Imperial Majesty for his kindness, Rubinstein was detained for luncheon—quite an unusual honour in autocratic Russia.

A few days before this event Rubinstein finished his *Concertstücke* for pianoforte and orchestra, dedicated to his pupil M. Breitner at Paris.

The official jubilee of Rubinstein's fifty years' musical career, which coincides with his sixtieth birthday, was celebrated in St. Petersburg on Saturday, 30th November — Duke George of Mecklenburg-Strelitz presiding. A gold medal specially struck by the Imperial Society of Music was presented to the hero of the day, who was also appointed an honorary citizen of Peterhof, an honorary member of the University of St. Petersburg, and last, but not least, Count Worontzoff Dashkoff announced the pleasure of his Imperial Majesty that Rubinstein should receive an annual pension of £300 sterling from the imperial privy purse.







W. G. K. 1872

RUBINSTEIN'S VILLA AT PETERHOF.

## CHAPTER X

### THE VILLA AT PETERHOF

IN 1874 the dream of Rubinstein's life was accomplished in the building of his villa at Peterhof.

Like Beethoven, like Schumann, and like Mendelssohn, Rubinstein is extremely sensible to the charms of nature ; and at Peterhof he is surrounded by all that nature in her most lavish mood can give to this Russian Arcadia on the shores of the Gulf of Finland.

Peterhof lies by the sea, a beautiful wooded tract of land dotted over with villas, the imperial palace, surrounded by its gorgeous fountains, facing the water, and the golden domes of its churches gleaming on all sides through the trees.

It is some twenty versts from St. Petersburg, and, whether one goes by land or water, a

delightful journey. By rail the way lies through groves and woods, skirting delightful dells with sparkling rivulets rushing past the forget-me-nots and ferns; and through rich meadows, where the cows tinkle their bells all day long as they stand lazily knee-deep in the long lush grasses and clover, or lie amongst the ox-eye daisies and buttercups chewing their cud.

By water the route is not less lovely. The broad blue waters of the Neva are full of movement and colour; the luxurious steamships, with their imperial flags flying, belonging to the Tsar and his family, are moored by the splendid granite quays. As far as the eye reaches, on all sides are splendid palaces, gardens, churches, and public buildings. At the mouth of the river lie the great war-ships the Tsar is always building, and a little way out in the gulf, whether one looks back on the city with the great gray pile of St. Isaacs and its golden dome looming grandly and solemnly against the blue sky, or the innumerable palaces and churches, or onwards to the shores of Finland, dim and low-lying in the distance, the scene is alike beautiful, brilliant, clear, well defined, and unequalled in colour.

In springtime, in summer, in autumn, and in winter, Peterhof is always beautiful.

In springtime the woods—and Peterhof is all one vast wood here and there intersected by dells and hills—are one carpet of wild hyacinths, lily of the valley, crocuses, yellow and mauve, primroses, and wood-violets. And then it is a very paradise ; the place is full of birds—thousands of thrushes and blackbirds are on all sides. The air, cool and fresh, is fragrant with the delicate mingled perfumes of the flowers, the aromatic sweetness of the pines ; the many streams and rivulets, released from their long bondage of ice during the winter months, rush musically over the wet brown rocks, their waters clear and bright as crystal, and then a little later, when the lilac and lime-trees are all in bloom, the nightingales commence singing.

In short, anything more freshly beautiful, more ideal, more exquisite than the northern spring—with its suddenness in coming, its poetry, its long white nights, when the sunrise comes with the twilight—in Peterhof, sheltered as it is from the storms and winds by its endless woods, is not to be imagined nor described.

In the summer-time—when the roses and

carnations are blossoming in all the gardens, when the pretty balconies of the Russian villas, or *datschas*, as they are called, are brilliant with scarlet geraniums and fuchsias, and the big sun-flowers make a broad spot of golden brilliance amidst all the green—Peterhof is cool and verdant. Squirrels and doves are everywhere, and the noisy grasshoppers alone disturb the silence.

But in autumn, when all the woods are taking on their russet hues, it is matchless. Nature then is not more lovely anywhere; the ground is one vast carpet of leaves, and look where one will, the golden reds, yellows, browns, and faded greens are mingled in a confusion of colour superbly beautiful.

In winter it is all whiteness, solitude, and weirdness. Snow lies everywhere on the bare branches of the trees, that take a thousand fantastic shapes, and during those long moonlight nights the whole place, frost-bound, glitters under the white rays; and as the traveller rushes over the trackless ground in a sledge, wrapped to the eyes in furs, the jingling of the bells on the horses' necks sounding merrily, and returns to St. Petersburg over the frozen

waters of the Gulf of Finland and the Neva at a pace that seems to snatch his breath from him, it is always with regret he leaves behind the white loveliness of Peterhof.

Rubinstein's villa is spacious and beautiful. It is built, like all the Russian *datschas*, of wood, painted a neutral gray-green colour, on a gentle rise of ground, with flowers surrounding it on all sides, and some splendid trees in close proximity bending over to a beautiful stretch of turf—green, well kept, and soft.

To the left, as one enters, lies a great fruit garden, and the entrance to the house is under a splendid porch covered over with Virginian creeper.

This leads into a long hall, at the end of which is the turret staircase leading to Rubinstein's tower, where he sits alone, undisturbed through the day, composing; his study being right at the top, a room with one large low window looking out over a beautiful stretch of wooded turf to the sea.

Here the great pianist-composer is in his element. The room is not very large, but still not small; at the window stands his writing-table, behind him a Becker grand pianoforte,

and on his right-hand side a great divan, flanked on each side by immense music-holders filled with his own works ; and, above all, a sinister bust in bronze of Mephistopheles, which Rubinstein laughingly describes as his inspiration.

The room is semicircular, and except for a charming statuette of the muse Euterpe at the extreme end of the pianoforte, facing the player, a handsome carpet, worked by some devoted lady admirers of the composer, and a few chairs, contains no other furniture.

This room is Rubinstein's especial delight ; all the rest of the beautiful villa he leaves to his guests and his family, but this is sacred to himself, and but few even of his personal friends are allowed a view of it.

The view from its windows—morning, noon, and night—is delightful, especially at the latter time, when the water is silvered over with moonlight, and the trees beneath take fantastic shapes under the white light of the moon-rays.

The villa consists of two stories, the entire first story being devoted to reception-rooms ; these, including a large dining-room, billiard-room, music-room, library, and three reception-



rooms, as well as Rubinstein's own terrace, are reached through a pretty breakfast-room, and three other terraces beautifully covered with flowers and creeping plants. Statues and flowers are everywhere about, the latter growing in Russian rooms luxuriously, and some of Rubinstein's palms and exotics are very lovely. By the Becker pianoforte are busts of Goethe, Shakespeare, and Michael Angelo, and, facing these, busts of Bach, Beethoven, and Schubert.

In fact, the whole villa, with its inlaid floors, painted ceilings, flowers, and statues, is very beautiful; the splendid presentations to Rubinstein in the library, immense wreaths of silver and gold, batons, albums, illuminated addresses, addresses carved on silver and silver gilt, all lying in glass cases, are not the least part of its splendours.

There is of course nothing baronial about it—nothing in the style that the master of Abbotsford would look for; but it is elegant, luxurious, and refined in arrangement, just what might be expected from Rubinstein.

The great composer-pianist is always happy here, and here dispenses his hospitality right royally.

In the seventies, what hospitality, what scenes the four walls of this villa saw when Rubinstein gave his famous musical soirées, and all St. Petersburg trooped out to Peterhof, known and unknown, to the great pianist-composer!

Now things are quieter: the old fire of Rubinstein's youth is no longer with him; he has lived more than half a century, his children have grown up, and he revels now in the quietness and calmness of solitude, with his books and his thoughts, his compositions and art, when only his friends and admirers allow him.

## CHAPTER XI

### RUBINSTEIN AS TEACHER

ONE of the incomprehensible sides of Rubinstein's character is this special aspect of it—his ability as teacher ; for, just as one could not suppose Sallust a moralist or Seneca a man careless of his fortune merely because they wished to pose as such, so it is impossible to believe Rubinstein, with his numerous caprices and whims, his ever-varying moods and vagaries, a good teacher simply because he gives lessons. A good teacher needs all those special qualities—patience, gentleness, calmness—which one certainly least expects to find in Rubinstein.

Nevertheless, perhaps there is no one in Europe who could be more patient, more calm, more gentle than Rubinstein with those pupils who still have or have had the incomparable good fortune of calling him master.

And there certainly never has been a master more particular, more exacting, or more painstaking.

His patience is limitless, but so indeed is his acquirement. He never loses his temper, like Bülow ; but Bülow's most cutting sarcasm is a mild thing in comparison to the biting lash of Rubinstein's tongue, or the keenness of his good-humoured banter, when a pupil fails him.

This nothing can equal ; but, if so, neither can anything equal his teaching for value and for benefit, as well as for simplicity and insight.

His method is not simple, neither is it obscure or hard to be understood ; but it requires very much of his pupils ; and his instruction is especially praiseworthy and valuable, inasmuch as it is free completely from all individuality or personal caprice of his own.

He lays aside his own taste completely, keeping his pupils almost exclusively to the study of the classics, and only to the most accurate text of these.

The musical world far and near has long since decided that Tausig's reading of the Chopin concerto in E minor is necessary, and an improvement ; and that Bülow's editions of

Beethoven and Klindworth's editions of Chopin are praiseworthy and very valuable for students.

Nothing can equal Rubinstein's anger when a pupil presents these editions.

"Do I want your rendering of M. Bülow's Beethoven, M. Czerney's Bach?" he often asks sarcastically; for, as he sees it, he considers it execrable that some of the present day artists should presume to present Beethoven and Chopin to the world after their personal idea.

"I want Beethoven, I want Bach, I want Chopin as they give themselves to us," he often says passionately; "they are good enough for me, and for my pupils they must be good enough also."

The great feature of Rubinstein's teaching is its earnestness; it is not an appointment or an afternoon's occupation, but a life interest. And as a teacher he is as some high-priest of the sacred mysteries of art—some Socrates, never a Utilitarian.

Nothing with him must be done for effect, no one bar added to, no one bar altered to suit individual taste; and even when those few pieces come up, as for instance the Funeral March of Chopin, which he alters so markedly in

colour himself, he never allows the pupil to follow his lead. "I do so and so, monsieur," he says, with his genial laugh and naïveté; "but that is no reason why you should follow my example, for I do wrong; be you warned of my caprice and do right."

In this Rubinstein is pre-eminently great, pre-eminently an artist, pre-eminently a great master.

His lessons are rather studies in poetry, in insight, in the conception of the ideal of the great masters, never a lesson in the ordinary sense. Technique and all that sort of thing a pupil must have before coming to him; but in so far as the beautiful can be made known, the soul of a piece fathomed, he does it for his pupils, and with them. There is no learning a piece of music with him, all that must be done before; and in this sense he is certainly no teacher, rather a prophet, for he busies himself only with conception, explanation, and with truth.

If it were possible to have a musical *Academy*, a musical *Lyceum*, like those schools of philosophy that flourished under the plane-trees that Plato loved, and under the shadow of

Mount Lycabettus, a blending of the two, the ideal and the material, then Rubinstein should be the presiding deity ; but unfortunately other thoughts and other occupations divide the great pianist-composer's time.

The first and last composer Rubinstein presents to his pupils is John Sebastian Bach, and for Bach he has an admiration little short of worship. He uses only the Bach Gesellschaft edition of this master's works, and for Beethoven always Breitkopf and Härtel.

He pays immense attention to the rhythm and touch ; is less particular—perhaps less fanciful—than Bülow about the phrasing, and spares himself no trouble to instil into the pupil a conservative although broad idea and view of art.

In the best sense of the word Rubinstein is a great master, and his teaching is more purely *musikalisch*, as the Germans say, than that of any other master of to-day ; in fact it is a deep and abiding regret that Peterhof is not another Weimar for pianoforte students, were it only for a part of the year, as with Liszt.

## CHAPTER XII

### RUBINSTEIN AS PIANIST

VOLUMES might be written in description of Rubinstein as a pianist, yet volumes would not describe him, for to speak of Rubinstein as a pianist is to speak of a subject without end.

Who could describe his wonderful touch—that wonderful something one finds in his playing and misses in that of all others—the blended passion and spirituality, the grace, delicacy, lightness, warmth, dreaminess, romance, perfection, power, grandeur, splendour—in one word, soul?

To have heard Rubinstein is to have had one of life's best gifts, to have known a happiness transcendent, a happiness words fail to describe, for with Rubinstein the notes are a means, not an end; and even to wrong notes he can give, and generally gives, a conception, a form, an



ideal ; for let him play as he will, this conception and ideal is the first concern with him.

For this very thing he has been over and over again censured by critics : they say that no matter what he plays, whether it be Bach, Beethoven, or Schumann, one is conscious before all of Rubinstein, and this they contend very justly is against the rules of pure art. If they were just in their censure one might hear them, but never was a greater injustice done a great artist than this injustice done Rubinstein, for his conception of the composer's ideas he plays is simply always above criticism.

That it is original and different from that of the critics who censure Rubinstein no one denies. How could it be otherwise ? one may well ask. That such and such an one says this is not Beethoven, this is not Bach, simply because Rubinstein's conception does not agree with theirs, is a circumstance that proves nothing ; few will deny that the conception of a great artist must be nearer truth than the conception of the majority.

In fact, why should one argue the matter ; for what two great artists have ever had a like conception of any great masterpiece in art ? The

displeasure of Rubinstein's critics—they are very few and scattered, in fact they owe their being noticed to this—arises from two causes : Rubinstein's unique virtuosity and that conservatism in art which, having grandly begun with Mendelssohn and Schumann, has been degraded by their successors into pure pedagogish red-tapism ; in other words, a certain set of critics have fallen in love with the method of Schumann and Mendelssohn's criticism, and, never having had the intelligence or the perception of these masters, have overlooked the spirit and the aim of it, which is the broadening not the narrowing of pure art, with the destruction of what is false.

The first, however, is the real cause of the accusation against Rubinstein. Rubinstein's virtuosity is certainly Rubinstein himself, and Rubinstein only, and one has but to hear him play the "Appassionata Sonata" of Beethoven, and any other well-known pianist after him, to understand how great this is. But what does this amount to? One never quarrels with one of two singers who interpret the same part because the voice of one is more beautiful than the voice of the other, yet this is what certain critics

are continually doing over Rubinstein, and not over Rubinstein alone. It is the spirit that guides the conservatism of the age with regard to pianoforte-playing; in fact, there are fifth-rate pianists who, because of their want of individuality as virtuosi, pass with these critics as great artists, simply because these latter do not take the trouble to distinguish between originality and personality in virtuosity and originality and personality in conception.

The latter is naturally one of the gravest charges one can lay against an artist, and one of the wildest a critic could make against Rubinstein, for never has there been an artist in his sane moments—all great artists have their insane moments—more faithful to the conception of the composer he plays than he. When it is Beethoven, it is Beethoven; when it is Chopin, it is Chopin; when Bach, Bach; and when Schumann, Schumann.

A glance at his concert programmes shows us this, with such pieces on them as the "Appassionata Sonata," Chopin's "Berceuse," Bach's "Fantasia Chromatica," Schumann's "C major Fantasia." All these four pieces require temperament in the pianist who attempts them,

and each the temperament proper to the composer's ideal.

No living pianist but Rubinstein possesses this diversity of temperament; but he has it, and the critics who would deny it to him or would censure him for it are indeed brave.

Of course temperament in pianoforte-playing with some critics is, in their opinion, the greatest evil; and the mediocrities whom, wanting this, they cry up are a thriving community. But at certain intervals, when the lion arouses himself and comes forth—in other words, when Rubinstein appears on our concert platforms—it is amusing to watch these same mediocrities scampering off to their hiding-places and to oblivion.

However, it would be absurd not to allow that sometimes Rubinstein's temperament overmasters him; but "sometimes" and "always" are not the same thing. There are days when he is out of humour, when he plays wrong notes; and, although there have been enthusiastic critics who maintain that the wrong notes of Rubinstein are better than the right notes of others, this is not so. Wrong notes are wrong notes and inexcusable. Better

say that these wrong notes are cast into the depths of oblivion by the grandeur of his right ones.

To a musician life can give no greater pleasure than that of hearing Rubinstein; it is to have a new conception of things, new thoughts, new ideas, new worlds, for Rubinstein is more than a pianist; when he plays he is a poet, a magician. With Beethoven we soar with him into the infinite; with Schumann into the mystical, the romantic, the transcendent; with Chopin into the dreamy, the tender, the passionate knowledge and conception of life's inner joys and sorrows. And how? one asks. How—that of course is his secret; but the reason of his success with us is that he has a soul which knows and harmonises with all these things. He has fathomed all the deepest feelings of the heart, and when he plays he reveals these, shows us what they are, what music is, what music means.

In material requirements he is no less amply endowed. He possesses a hand made as it were for the pianoforte, supple, strong, light, with fleshy finger tips, and a broad masterly grasp in the span of the fingers. And he seems to have

from nature the instinct that divines every quality of touch from the most perfect legato to the most crisp and clear of staccatos. But this is not all; he can sing on the pianoforte with all the beauty of a human voice, with pathos and sadness and all feeling, as he will; and those who have heard him play one of his own most exquisite *romances* or the nocturnes of Chopin have been moved to a genuine enthusiasm from the versatility of his genius when, a second later, he has dashed into the enormous difficulties of his own *études*, a polonaise of Chopin, or one of Liszt's wonderful rhapsodies, with a fire and passion and a magnificent virtuosity that carried all before it in its overwhelming grandeur of conception.

In fact, it is this overwhelming temperament of Rubinstein's that astonishes and frightens reserved critics; they cannot understand it nor him. To go through life with all that storm and stress, all that passion and feeling locked up in his breast, is something that appals them; they cannot conceive it. "It is unnatural," they cry; but, thank heaven, it is not that. It is gigantic, wonderful, awe-striking, but never unnatural; and it is what has made the great

splendour of Rubinstein's genius and his success as a pianist.

It has been often remarked that Rubinstein will never form a school of pianoforte-playing, and this is perhaps true. There has been but one Rubinstein. And he will certainly never form another ; for the secret of Rubinstein's wonderful playing lies in his extraordinary mastery over the tone and over his touch. He has made it a special study ; and this is something he can never teach.

In fact, this is what makes the vast difference between Rubinstein's playing and that of all others.

One of the criticisms oftenest and most fairly passed on the great pianist's playing is, that he never plays any piece twice alike. And there is some truth in this. This, in fact, is one of the causes that have led certain critics to believe that Rubinstein does not enter into the composer's idea.

But Rubinstein, like all great artists, is above criticism. Critics and their pens can disseminate what they will, but Rubinstein remains Rubinstein, and has remained so, one of the wonders of our age, and one of the blessings of it.

## CHAPTER XIII

### RUBINSTEIN AS COMPOSER

THE coming of Rubinstein to Russia, when a lad of nineteen years, was one of the most unfortunate steps of his life. Fame and honour and glory he has received in Russia and from Russia, but the field for his labours has been too small. He has done gigantic things in Russia, but Russia is not ripe enough to understand them, and therefore too often has he been misunderstood by his own countrymen, and his plans for their good frustrated, crossed, and overthrown.

His place was in Germany, and had he remained in Germany he would now be a greater man, a happier one, and one better understood; for of the real Rubinstein, the man and artist as he is, not ten in so many hundreds of his fellow-workers know anything.



In Russia he is misjudged, pursued by jealousy and intrigue, completely misunderstood. In all the rest of Europe he is unknown.

To a nature such as his—proud, reserved, silent—all resistance against this fate, purely the result of chance, is impossible ; he accepts the fiat of his contemporaries and goes his way alone, yet there has been no musician in Europe more capable of being a guiding light to his contemporaries or a Socrates for the wise.

For him, unlike Wagner, there has been no Liszt and no Louis of Bavaria, yet Wagner himself was not a more daring musical thinker. No man has had fewer helps than Rubinstein, no man has needed them more. Wagner, after having been derided, scorned, and neglected all through his youth and manhood, got himself heard at length in his old age, through his indomitable spirit and the generosity of his powerful friends, which he himself was not too proud to sue for ; but Rubinstein, silent always, remains silent still.

Had Rubinstein been in Germany this would have been impossible, amidst all the bustle and stir of musical life there. He should and must have cried out when the shoe pinched him ; he would have had his pupils, who in return would have im-

parted to a wider circle the art principles coming from him. In his friends and equals he would have had an audience for his beliefs and ideas. In short, in Germany he would have lived, he would have been a power, an element of strength in the seething furnace of musical life and work, an acting principal; whereas in Russia, shut up for months in a city like St. Petersburg, where the very opera is under imperial control, and an aristocratic *chinovnik*, one of a body of court amateurs, has the directions of its musical wellbeing, Rubinstein has had no place, and no possibility of putting forth his own splendid power of intellect and of thought. Yet even here, cribbed, cabined, and confined, he has made his mark—he has left a monument to his own greatness in the Conservatory, a school of music which, although the youngest, is second to none in Europe.

This has been a Herculean work, but it has done nothing for Rubinstein the composer, and still less for foreign art-life.

As a composer Rubinstein is one on whom the mantle of Schubert has fallen, and as a melodist he has no rival and no equal to-day, for just as Brahms is the contrapuntal, Wagner

the dramatic, so is Rubinstein the lyric genius of the age.

As a song writer Rubinstein is superb, a rival of Schubert; all that is exquisite in the poetry of Moore, Byron, Goethe, Heine, De Musset, he has embodied in strains of immortal beauty.

Anything more lovely than his Hebrew melodies of Byron it is impossible to imagine; they are the perfection, even the exquisite perfection of poetry. What can be more tender than his "Asra," the weird beauty and originality of which is beyond comparison; or sweeter than the many songs of spring, in which the wild *frühlingsluft* seems caged!

These alone—pearls strewn in the way of our daily life, pearls offered to all, comprehensible by all,—these alone are sufficient to have secured for Rubinstein deathless fame.

Amidst all the dross and tinsel of the age, their beauty, like the beauty of the dawn, of the sweetness of flowers, of all those beautiful things in Nature, water and wood and mountain, exist for us always and at all times.

They are the most precious treasure a nation can have. "Trifles, trifles," exclaims some

reviewer in his study as he glances at the two pages of many of them ; but these trifles are pearls without price.

Rubinstein has written more than two hundred of these, taking them, of course, out of their opus arrangement.

The great pianist has led a busy life. With this vast number of songs, and all his own great concerts, his travels far and wide, the concerts he has conducted, his work at the Conservatory, one might well consider these compositions the utmost he could accomplish, even with all his great and unexcelled powers ; yet we find these to be but the thoughts and inspiration of spare moments in the midst of musical labours that are gigantic. In this power of work Rubinstein has no equal and no rival.

He has written ten operas : four on his first coming to St. Petersburg, about the years 1850 and 1851 ; three at the suggestion of the Grand Duchess Hélène, which were all except one destroyed by a fire in the theatre they were played in ; then, after *Lalla Rookh* or *Feramors*, *Die Kinder der Haide*, *Merchant Kalaschnikoff*, *Nero*, *Demon*, and *Goriuscha*. This is colossal : one might well cry stop ; but no, we

have the sacred operas *Maccabäer*, *Tower of Babel*, *Paradise Lost*, *Sulamith*, *Moses*.

We have six great symphonies, two of which, the *Ocean* and *Dramatic*, are magnificent creations.

We have five great pianoforte concertos, concertos and concerted pieces for violin and 'cello, string quartettes, quintettes, trios, innumerable solo pieces, many of them, like the splendid *Lenore* ballad for the pianoforte, pieces of wonderful beauty, stars in the firmament of art, and overtures—but one must cry stop somewhere.

In all, the Schubertian vein of melody, together with his own warm passionate temperament and poetic ideality, are discernible.

He is capable in all fields, he has worked in all fields, and he has failed in none.

He is a poet always, and can ring the changes in his music on every chord of the human heart, whether it be passion, joy, woe, longing, melancholy, languor, love, hate, fear, anguish, or ecstasy—his genius holds the key to all.

He has already reached the one hundred and thirteenth opus, and that only the printed opus, for very many of his best works, composed when a young man, have been lost and

completely forgotten even by Rubinstein himself.

It has been sometimes remarked that Rubinstein has written too much; but this is an absurdity. All composers, artists, and writers, from the necessity of their very talent, must be lavish in production; they write, not for themselves or others, but because they must write.

Time, however, and future generations will judge of this, but they certainly will do him more justice than we have done; and when much of the music of our time has passed away or sunk into oblivion, our children and our children's children will be honouring and enjoying the works and the genius of Anton Rubinstein.

Had Rubinstein been a little less faithful to Russia, a little less patriotic, a little less given to sacrificing himself for the interests of others, he might have witnessed this in his own time. His idea of sacred opera would have been received and made known, and he would have been a power influencing the art-world far and near.

Germany would have known how to honour him, how to listen to him, how to understand

him—in short, would have known how to have triumphed where Russia, to her own grievous loss, has dismally failed.

Some years hence, when his mighty intellect has passed away, when his counsels, so often unheeded or derided, are no more to be had, and when those who have least valued him awake to find themselves, like seamen in difficulties, with no captain to direct them, they will understand this and regret.

### LIST OF RUBINSTEIN'S WORKS

TAKEN FROM CATALOGUE OF WORKS IN THE CONSERVATORY  
LIBRARY AT ST. PETERSBURG

- Op. 1. Onidine study for pianoforte.
1. Six songs.
  2. Two fantasias.
  2. Song.
  3. Two melodies.
  3. Song.
  4. Mazurka.
  4. Russian song.
  5. Three piano pieces, Polonaise C major, Cracovienne E flat, Mazurka G major.
  5. Die Nachtigal.
  6. Tarantella for piano, B major.
  6. Die Lerche.
  7. Impromptu Caprice for pianoforte, A minor.

- Op. 7. Homage to Jenny Lind.  
8. Six romances.  
8. Voix intérieures for pianoforte, Volkslied, Reverie, Impromptu.  
9. Octett.  
9. Three melodies for pianoforte—Chanson Russe, Nocturne sur l'eau, La Cataracte.  
10. Kamenoi Ostrow, twenty-four portraits for pianoforte.  
10. Two nocturnes.  
11. Three pieces, piano and violin, Allegro Appassionato.  
Andante.  
Allegro.  
11. Three pieces, piano and 'cello, Andante quasi Adagio.  
Allegro Con Moto.  
Allegro Risoluto.  
11. Three pieces, piano and violin, Moderato.  
Allegro Con Moto.  
Allegretto.  
12. Sonata.<sup>1</sup>  
13. Sonata, G major, piano and violin.  
14. Le Bal, Fantasia in ten numbers—  
1. Caprice.  
2. Polonaise.  
3. Contredanse.  
4. Waltz.  
5. Intermezzo.  
6. Polka.  
7. Polka Mazurka.  
8. Mazurka.
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<sup>1</sup> There are two of each number till Op. 12, for Rubinstein, after writing twelve works in childhood, commenced again at Op. 1.



9. Galop.
10. Le Beve.
- Op. 15. Two Trios, piano, violin, and violoncello, F major and G major.
16. Three pieces for piano, Impromptu, E flat.  
Berceuse, D major.  
Serenade, G minor.
17. Three string quartettes, G major, C minor, F major.
18. Piano and Violoncello Sonata, D major.
19. Sonata, piano and violin, A minor.
20. Sonata for piano, C minor.
21. Three caprices for piano, F sharp major.  
D major.  
E flat major.
22. Three serenades, F major, G minor, E flat major.
23. Six études.
24. Six preludes, A flat, F minor, G major, B minor, G major, C minor.
25. Concerto, E minor.
26. Two pieces for pianoforte, Romance, F major.  
Impromptu, A minor.
27. Ten songs.
28. Two pieces for pianoforte, Nocturne, G flat.  
Caprice, E flat.
29. Two funeral marches—F minor, on the death of an artist. C minor, on the death of a hero.
30. Two pieces for pianoforte, Barcarolle, F minor.  
Allegro Appassionato, D minor.
31. Six songs for four men's voices—  
No. 1. Die Schlanke Wasserlilie (von Heine).  
No. 2. Trinklied, Wie die Nachtigallen (Merza Schaffy).

- No. 3. Meeresstille und Glückliche Fahrt.  
Tiefe Stille (Goethe).  
Die Nebel Zerreißen (Goethe).
- No. 4. Jagdlust (Tieck).
- No. 5. Die Rache (Uhland).
- No. 6. Wiederhalle.
- Op. 32. Six songs, words from Heine.
33. Six songs.
34. Twelve songs.
35. Concerto, F major.
36. Twelve songs.
37. Achrostychon for piano, L, F major.  
A, G minor.  
U, B-flat major.  
R, D minor.  
A, F major.
38. Suite for pianoforte, Prelude.  
Minuet.  
Gigue.  
Sarabande.  
Gavotte.  
Passacaille.  
Allemande.  
Courante.  
Passepied.  
Bouree.
39. Sonata, piano and violoncello, G major.
40. Symphony, F major.
41. Sonata for pianoforte, F major.
42. Symphony, Ocean, C major.
43. Overture.
44. Soirées at St. Petersburg, six pieces—

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- Romance.
  - Preghiera.
  - Nocturne.
  - Scherzo.
  - Impromptu.
  - Appassionato.
  - 45. (No. 1) Concerto (pianoforte), G major ; (No. 2) Barcarolle, A minor.
  - 46. Concerto, violin and orchestra.
  - 47. Three string quartettes, E minor, B flat major, D minor.
  - 48. Twelve duets.
  - 49. Sonata, F minor, viola and piano.
  - 50. Six characteristic pieces, four hands—
    - Nocturne.
    - Barcarolle.
    - Berceuse.
    - Scherzo.
    - Caprice.
    - March.
  - 51. Six pieces for pianoforte, Melancholie, G minor.
    - Enjoyment, B major.
    - Reverie, A minor.
    - Caprice, D flat.
    - Passion, F major.
    - Coquetterie, B major.
  - 52. Trio, B major.
  - 53. Six fugues, A flat, F minor, E major, B minor, G major, C minor.
  - 54. Oratorio, "Paradise Lost."
  - 55. Quartette.
  - 56. Third Symphony, A major.

- Op. 57. Six songs.
58. Scena and aria for contralto and orchestra.
59. Quartette, F major.
60. Concert overture, B flat.
61. Three choruses for men's voices.
62. Six choruses for various voices.
63. Water Nymph, Rusalka (Lermontoff), chorus with orchestra for women's voices.
64. Six romances, words by Kriloff.
65. Concerto, violoncello and orchestra, A minor.
66. Quartette, C major.
67. Six duets.
68. Faust, characteristic pieces, for orchestra.
69. Five pieces for pianoforte, Caprice, A flat.  
Nocturne, G major  
Scherzo, A minor.  
Romance, B minor.  
Forcata, D minor.
70. Concerto for pianoforte and orchestra, D minor.
71. Three pieces for pianoforte, Nocturne.  
Mazurka.  
Scherzo.
72. Six songs.
73. Fantasie for pianoforte, F major.
74. Cantata with orchestra.
75. Album de Peterhof, twelve pieces—  
Souvenir, E major.  
Aubade, E flat.  
Marche funèbre, G major.  
Impromptu, E flat.  
Reverie.  
Caprice, F major.

Pensées, F sharp minor.

Nocturne, G major.

Prelude, D major.

Mazurka, D minor.

Romance, B flat major.

Scherzo, E major.

Op. 76. Six songs.

77. Fantasia for pianoforte, E minor.

78. Twelve songs.

79. Ivan the Terrible, picture for orchestra.

80. Tower of Babel oratorio—sacred opera.

81. Six études for piano.

82. National Dances, seven — Russian, Caucasian,  
Polish, Hungarian, Italian, German, Bohemian.

83. Twelve songs.

84. Fantasia for pianoforte and orchestra, C major.

85. Trio No. 4, A major.

86. Romance and Caprice, piano and violin.

87. Don Quixote, characteristic piece for orchestra.

88. Theme and Variations, D major, for pianoforte.

89. Sonata, four hands, for pianoforte, D major.

90. Two string quartettes, G minor, E minor.

91. Die Gedichte und das Requiem für Mignon.

92. Two scenes and arias for mezzo-soprano and  
orchestra—

Hecuba.

Hagar.

93. Miscellaneous : 1. Ballade Leonore.

2. Variations, Yankee Doodle.

3. Three songs.

4. Two Russian serenades, D  
minor and A minor.

5. Two études, D minor, A major.
6. Scherzo, F major.
7. Barcarolle, A minor.
8. Two pianoforte pieces—  
Melody, F sharp minor.  
Impromptu, A flat.
9. Twelve pieces.
- Op. 94. Concerto for pianoforte, E flat.
95. Dramatic symphony No. 4, D minor.
96. Concerto, D minor, violoncello and orchestra.
97. Sextet, D major.
98. Sonata for pianoforte.
99. Quartette, G minor.
100. Sonata No. 4, A minor, for pianoforte.
101. Twelve songs.
102. Caprice Russe.
103. Masquerade for four hands (twenty numbers).
104. Six pieces for pianoforte—  
Elégie.  
Variations.  
Étude.  
Barcarolle.  
Impromptu.  
Ballade.
105. Twelve songs.
106. Two string quartettes, A flat and F minor.
107. Russian symphony No. 5, G minor.
108. Trio No. 5, C minor.
109. Twelve pieces for pianoforte—  
Prelude.  
Waltz.  
Nocturne.

Scherzo.  
 Impromptu.  
 Reverie Caprice.  
 Bauchaniges.  
 Theme and Variations.  
 Étude, E flat.

- Op. 110. Eroica Fantasia.  
 111. Symphony No. 6, A minor.  
 112. Sacred opera, four numbers, "Moses."  
 113. Concertstücke, pianoforte and orchestra.

WORKS WITHOUT OPUS NUMBER.

Feramors.  
 Demon.  
 Maccabäer.  
 Merchant Kalaschnikoff.  
 Nero.  
 Sulamith.  
 Overture and opera, Dimitry Donskoi.  
 Two études for pianoforte.  
 Euphemia Polka.  
 Four polkas.  
 Fantasia for pianoforte on two Hungarian melodies.  
 Barcarolle, G major, for pianoforte.  
 Trot de Cavalerie for pianoforte.  
 Waltz Caprice, E flat.  
 Cadenzas for concertos, Beethoven.  
     D minor concerto, Mozart.  
 Six songs.  
 Two songs.

Song, Hüte dich.

Song, Chanson d'Amour.

Song, Fatmé.

Bluet for pianoforte.

Marie Polka.

Song, Wenn Ich diese Klage.

Opera, Thomas the Fool.

Opera, Siberian Hunters.

Opera, Vengeance.



## CHAPTER XIV

### RUBINSTEIN AS MAN

"It is very easy to describe me," said Rubinstein once of himself jokingly. "I am simply much hair and little nose;" and although this is a crude description it is a true one.

In figure, demeanour, and courage Rubinstein is one of those vulgarly termed the "distinguished few," and there has been in his time no figure amongst the many that have appeared on European platforms more striking than his.

A head that one can only describe—hackneyed as the expression is—as lion-like belongs to the great pianist, with a firm, splendid throat, set on well-shaped shoulders; and since one half the world calls him handsome and the other half ugly—a fact—it is hard to give a description that will satisfy all.

If, however, Greek regularity of feature and

Apollo-like beauty be the type before one, then Rubinstein is ugly ; but if a splendid manliness of carriage, a mouth and face capable of all expressions, with a firm beautiful chin, a forehead wide, high, and thoughtful, and a striking individuality, be things admired before all mere lines of regular beauty, then Rubinstein has no rival.

In fact, he has the appearance of a genius and a great man, and his ugliness, as an enthusiastic admirer of his once described it, if ugliness, is a sublime ugliness.

A peculiar droop of the upper eyelids at the right and left sides of the forehead, gives an odd expression to his face, and the serene thoughtfulness of his forehead is strongly at variance with the lines of passion and impetuosity about his mouth.

The droop of his eyelids makes it hard to know what colour his eyes are, but on rare occasions when they are lifted one gets a flashing glance of blue eyes that are oftenest full of surprise or a merry sarcasm, for the less Rubinstein is surprised or sarcastic the closer he keeps hidden those features some one has aptly described as the windows of the soul.

He wears neither beard nor moustachios, from vanity perhaps, since his mouth and chin are unusually handsome and powerful; and the fashion in which he throws back his long thick hair from his forehead serves to show off the ideal thoughtful beauty of this latter to perfection; in short, he is, as one expects him to be, and one glance is sufficient to mark him out as a personage, an artist, passionate and capricious, a dreamer, and an enthusiast.

He bears a striking resemblance to Beethoven, and in a beautifully finished oil-painting of Augener of Vienna, taken when he was quite a young man, one might easily mistake him for the great Bonn master.

In figure he is neither very tall nor of medium height, but something between the two, well formed and in proportion; and the only eccentricity he affects in his dress is a certain disarray of his necktie, very characteristic and well known.

When amongst friends or dispensing the friendly hospitality he is famed for, his temperament is simple, genial, and kindly; but he is saturated through and through with a certain Shakespearian humour, and it is precisely with this

very humour he screens himself from the gaze of the world at large.

In character he is like all great men, with strong passions and equally strong wills—contradictory.

No man has ever had a warmer heart, no man has oftener had more generous or tender impulses than he; yet when necessity arises no man can count the costs more deliberately or be firmer against all sentiment; in this he resembles Goethe strongly, inheriting the same from his grandfather, Roman Rubinstein.

All his life long Rubinstein has given away vast sums to needy musicians and artists of all kinds, although he has done so with studied secrecy, and in his dealings with all he has been careful to a nicety of their feelings. Yet, when he again assumed the direction of the St. Petersburg Conservatory in 1887-88 he went to work regardless of the feelings of the whole community.

There were then over eight hundred students, who had been admitted under the direction of that gifted, kindly, and most amiable of men, the late Carl Davidoff.

Of these eight hundred but three-fourths

were eligible, and the remaining fourth Rubinstein dismissed, although perfectly conscious he was in a manner taking the very bread out of their mouths by so doing.

They were, most of them, miserably poor ; all were looking to make a living, in however humble the capacity, through art ; some had even passed years of study in the Conservatory ; but even so Rubinstein found them wanting, and he would have none of them, despite the piteous entreaties wrung from nearly two hundred students who suddenly saw ruin and disappointment of their hopes staring them in the face.

A hard-hearted man would have done this and thought no more of it ; a man like Bismarck would have gloried in it—safe and secure, of course, himself in some vast chateau ; but a man with a nature so sympathetic and generous as Rubinstein's could only perform it through a will of iron, a sense of justice appalling.

All these Rubinstein possesses ; his will is iron, but he has, if so, as well, as many caprices as a woman. He is not, like Liszt, a thing of caprice and electricity, a whim of the gods, as it

were, sent on earth to bewilder and delight mortals, but at times Liszt himself is rivalled.

Of course in his earlier years Rubinstein gave way to caprice more, but at no time have his caprices overmastered him. With his consent they have whirled him from side to side, they have bent him and bruised him, but they have never blinded his vision and conception, nor broken him.

Without caprice he could not have been Rubinstein, that compound of artistic greatness which has enthralled thousands in every town in Europe by the force and impetuosity of his genius, and raised millions of hearts to feelings of boundless wonder and ecstasy.

A vigorous mind, Burke tells us, is as necessarily accompanied by violent passions as a great fire with heat; but Rubinstein has always controlled his passions, and in controlling these he controlled others.

At the same time Rubinstein has never controlled others for his own benefit, in fact quite the contrary, for where all justice compelled him to do this—for instance, in regard to his own works, the playing of his compositions and operas—pride made him do just the opposite.

This, in fact, is the only weakness in an otherwise splendidly strong character ; and a weakness it is. The man who is hungry and goes hungry simply because he won't ask, even receive, from willing debtors the bread he needs, is a proud man surely—a man strong enough to say, like the old patriarch, "I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, 'I have made Abram rich.' " But even so, he is a weak man.

Man was made to support man, the world leans and upholds itself, and the man who does all the upholding and is too proud to do any of the leaning has a crank of foolishness in his brain, a pride that is a veritable weakness.

Rubinstein possesses a profoundly sensitive and nervous temperament, a temperament which to-day sends him into the heights of ecstasy, to-morrow into the depths of despair—oftenest now the latter—and he delights in assuring his friends that he is a cynic and a pessimist.

By nature, however, he is anything but this ; his music tells us that, and his laugh alone gives it the lie direct. When Schopenhauer cries out to us in the bitter agony of his pessimism, we know it is true ; or when Swift, with his keen

pointed irony and grim smileless visage, moves by us, we feel it without words at all, but with Rubinstein—never. A passing whim, a caprice, a trifling failure in everyday life of his plans; such is his pessimism—no more.

At the same time, Rubinstein is far from being a happy man; but between unhappiness and pessimism what a vast difference; in fact, Rubinstein is but *blasé*, even as Raleigh was *blasé* when he wrote those beautiful lines of his on the melancholy, distaste, and disappointment following on all satisfied desires. There are some natures so, and for them, of course, life must be wearisome when not miserable.

Fifty years of artistic life, the virtuoso *rôle* of which was one long series of enthusiastic triumphs, with all its brilliance, toil, and worry, is not calculated to leave a man with such a restless ever-soaring imagination as Rubinstein has a philosopher, and Rubinstein is not a philosopher.

All that life could offer one individual has been given him, but it has not satisfied him, no more than it satisfied Beethoven, Chopin, Schumann; but Rubinstein is still more unhappy than they, for he looks for nothing beyond this



life—so much for Russian holy water and chrism—and when speaking of the priests he always smiles.

“There are but two classes,” he says wittily—“those who deceive themselves and those who deceive others”; here his belief ends.

In social life Rubinstein is what one describes as a good fellow; he is fond of a good story, especially when highly flavoured; a game of cards or billiards; and he is never so happy as when paying compliments to a pretty woman, and whether the latter be empress, queen, or peasant it is quite the same for him. On one occasion in London the Princess of Wales sent for him, and he met her Royal Highness with the startling phrase on his lips that he was delighted to see her, because she was looking lovely. On this occasion too, Rubinstein when bowing was about to kiss the hand of the princess, when she hurriedly withdrew it, saying hastily it was not the custom in England.

“With us,” said Rubinstein blandly, “it is the law.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This is a fact in the Russian court. Rubinstein in answering so, however, meant it in a double sense, as one can see by substituting *me* for *us*.

In public life Rubinstein is simple and unaffected, very courteous, and always at his ease, although self-conscious, ready at any time to be of use where he can, and a little old fashioned in his punctilious attention to trifles.

He is a patriot to the heart's core, and his patriotism is no mere peg upon which to hang the sentimentalities, but a solid duty as he sees it—a duty which he fulfils faithfully and untiringly.

He is extremely well read on all subjects, speaking French, German, Russian, and English fluently, and understanding Spanish and Italian. His favourite reading is history and poetry. Zola is his favourite novelist, and of the poets, Goethe, Heine, De Musset, Poushkin, Lermontoff, Scott, Byron, Milton, Moore, Burns, and of course Shakespeare. He never reads philosophy, and whether Plato or Kant, Aristotle or Comte, he looks on all as men who have wasted time.

As a friend, one can have no one truer or warmer; and although he calls himself a misanthrope, he is delightfully inconsistent, for the amount of marriage dowers he has given to penniless maidens when he was coining money

on his concert tours is a standing joke amongst his friends.

This is his one great grievance now—his present limited or stationary income, for the great pianist-composer has a family, and what he has not only prevents him from spending the proverbial shilling on the needy applicants that clamorously assail him, but often enough is all too little for what he has to do with it.

Notwithstanding this, Rubinstein has the name of being a millionaire; but although the great pianist-composer has made great fortunes all his life, he has known how to spend them and give them away, as Liszt and Mario did before him.

Among the most curious traits in Rubinstein's character are his superstitions; they are few, but they exist firmly. Amongst these is his horror of travelling, or rather of setting out on a journey, either on Friday or Monday—two unlucky days as the Russians count them.

Of course it would be curious if Rubinstein, a Russian, were altogether without some fancies; but still it is not the less strange to find these with a man of his thorough-going character, and it is only perhaps when we remember John-

son counting his steps to arrange that his right foot entered a place first, that we can believe it.

Chopin, of course, was superstitious, as well as Mozart. Chopin even saw spirits, like Benvenuto Cellini, Tasso, and our own Shelley; but then Rubinstein's *ego* is a much more healthy thing than was that belonging to Chopin, and the very fact of this superstition in the character of a man like Rubinstein is to be wondered at. Side by side, however, with all his strength of character is a very remarkable romanticism, a longing and a seeking after the strange and hidden in Nature, and this is not the least of Rubinstein's charms. At sixty years of age—nearly so—it leaves him still young, still able to enjoy what younger men have lost all taste for, and what gives to him the poetry in life, the beautiful simplicity which in one way or another we find invariably with all great men.





*Max Rubinstein*

## CHAPTER XV

RUBINSTEIN NOW (1888-89)

AT present Rubinstein leads a quiet and more or less uneventful life. He rises every morning at seven, when he takes his coffee ; and when he is in St. Petersburg, as he is every winter, spring, and autumn, he goes at nine o'clock to the Conservatory.

Twice in the week there he has a small pianoforte class, twice in the week a class for *ensemble* playing, and twice in the week also an orchestral class ; for the rest he superintends the work of the entire body of professors ; those having complaints can go to him each day from one till two o'clock ; he hears all pupils who are proposed for playing at the fortnightly music evenings of the pupils, and personally conducts all examinations.

The course of the Conservatory—one of the

stiffest in Europe—he has himself formed, and now there seems every likelihood that Rubinstein will soon be able to go on to Kiev and there form a great singing school, as he is hoping to do.

Except at Peterhof he does not compose, his whole time being given to the Conservatory, where he remains each day from nine till five o'clock, returning very often in the evening after dinner also.

It is very seldom now that Rubinstein plays at private houses, and never except at those of his oldest friends, one of whom is the daughter of the Grand Duchess Hélène, the Grand Duchess Catherine, where Rubinstein is oftenest to be heard; he also rarely or never dines out, for he himself keeps open house, and at his six o'clock dinner one usually finds a large circle, and, of course, whenever they visit St. Petersburg, musical and artistic celebrities of all kinds. After dinner, if there happen to be no concerts, or no duties for Rubinstein at the Conservatory, he usually enjoys a game at cards, whist or preference. Whilst cards are being played tea is served, and at an early hour, eleven usually, after a light supper—which Rubinstein never



partakes of—his guests, knowing his regular habits, retire.

This is Rubinstein's daily life ; he seldom goes to the theatre or opera, for, strange to relate, the minister of the imperial theatres, Count Worontzoff, not only makes the same difficulty for Rubinstein as for the rest of the public in securing a box—but never even thinks of granting the composer a box<sup>1</sup>—even a seat when his own works are performed ! How different would all this have been had Rubinstein only been in Germany, in any one of the towns there, or in London, in New York, anywhere except in St. Petersburg. One can see him in other scenes so vividly—one *has* seen him—in scenes like those of the performances of his *Nero*, *Demon*, *Sulamith*, in Hamburg and elsewhere, when the great composer was honoured as he deserves, and the people in honouring him paid honour to themselves and to their land.

Now that Rubinstein has finished his career

<sup>1</sup> The opera in St. Petersburg, by the bungling of aristocratic officials, is among the unattainable things there, for one has to lodge a petition for a seat or box several days in advance, and in the end is generally refused, the aristocratic officials selling the places at high prices to brokers, who invariably sell them at prices still higher ; even the press have no rights of free admission.

as pianist, it is wellnigh impossible that any impresario should tempt him to come amongst his admirers as of old—the lion pianist Anton Rubinstein,—therefore his works are all that the public will be concerned with, and these, as years roll on and as they become known and studied, if they do not efface this great reputation of Anton Rubinstein the pianist, will long survive it; for in one man have been united two of the most brilliant geniuses of our century, that of Anton Rubinstein the pianist, whose wonderful career in all its brilliance, like some glorious sunset, is now fast fading from our view, and that of Anton Rubinstein the composer, whose genius, unnoticed by so many, like the sunrise is now in all its strength slowly rising in the horizon of Russian art, where it will remain for ever one of the brightest orbs our century has ever seen.

THE END

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